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The Place of Shakespeare: Performing *King Lear* and  
*The Tempest* in an Endangered World

By

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## Abstract

This thesis brings ecocriticism to Shakespearean performance through an examination of adapted performance worlds. Studying cinematic and theatrical productions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, it develops a strategy of ecopoetic analysis: a critical approach to the creation of worlds in the process of adapting a play for performance. This work developed out of my own environmentalism and experience in performing Shakespeare's works. My goal is to develop a critical strategy for examining performance that utilises the tools of ecological criticism and furthers the fields of performance studies and ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism modifies the scientific analyses performed by ecologists for looking at works of art. Beginning with the principal that everything is connected to everything else, ecocritics focus on the interactions between elements of a work, the interactions between the work and the world at large, and between the work and its audience. I examine the cultural context of a work, other landmark works with which it engages intertextually, and the reactions of original audience members, especially journalistic and academic reviewers, in order to ascertain how an individual production adapts a Shakespearean play to a new environment.

I found in my analyses that Shakespeare's works are particularly fertile ground for an ecopoetic analysis. Directors, in their efforts to keep his work relevant to a modern audience, frequently adapt and alter the worlds of Shakespeare's plays in their productions. My ecopoetic approach to these productions reveals the ways in which the performances engage their audience, providing a better understanding of how to increase participatory spectatorship. I also found that this approach reveals underlying engagements between individual productions and the culture out of which they grew, and that the construction of performance environments is tied to cultural conceptions of the natural world. Finally, I discovered that Shakespeare's works are an international language for performance, with adapters around the world experimenting with his plays in order to further the effectiveness of theatrical and cinematic production. As such, they are a logical place in which to formulate a new method of performance criticism, one which engages the world of the performance, the context of the production, and the audience that experiences the performance world.

This thesis confronts numerous difficulties, including the fact that ecocriticism does not provide a critical apparatus as such, but is a politically-inspired way of viewing works. As such, I develop a more rigorous method of analysis, applying the tools of ecological science (interconnectedness, ecosystems, and adaptation), and the ethos of a modified phenomenology of performance criticism, to the worlds of performances. The crucial confrontation in my work is between nature and culture. I argue that the two are mutually constructing, and that performance occupies a place in which the two meet and interact and is thus the ideal ecosystem in which to investigate the interactions between culture and nature. Our world is endangered, the effects of global climate change and pollution are potentially catastrophic for us all. The issues that we face, the relationship between our human culture and our natural world, are dramatised in the works that I examine. The ecopoetic model of analysis that I develop can be applied to a greater variety of performance works, and this critical methodology is paramount for understanding the world and our place within it.

## **Introduction & Methodology**

## Chapter 1:

### Introduction to Ecocriticism and Survey of the Relevant Literature

Ecocriticism as a term was coined by William Rueckert in a 1978 essay titled “Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism.”<sup>1</sup> In his article he proposes “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.”<sup>2</sup> Ecology, a term coined by zoologist Ernst Haeckel in the late nineteenth century, is defined as “the study of the economy of animals and plants; that branch of biology which deals with the relations of living organisms to their surroundings, their habits and modes of life, etc.”<sup>3</sup> Like “economy,” ecology derives from the Greek word *oikos* or household, but is combined with *logos*, or study, rather than *nomos*, or management. Baz Kershaw identifies a level of reflexivity in this definition not often acknowledged by other theorists, saying that the etymology of the word ecology “implies *both* ‘study *of* the house’ *and* ‘study *in* the house’ of nature. Hence ‘ecology’ fundamentally emphasises the inseparable and reflexive interrelational and interdependent qualities of systems *as* systems, however their components are defined.”<sup>4</sup> Ecology takes as its primary study natural systems: (usually) small locales known as ecosystems. Ecologists apply scientific techniques culled from geology, hydrology, tectonics, biology, and chemistry (to name a few) to study these “[eco]systems *as* systems” as well as to study the interactions between ecosystems.

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<sup>1</sup> William Rueckert, “Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism,” *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA, and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996) 105-123.

<sup>2</sup> Rueckert 107.

<sup>3</sup> “Ecology,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University, 2006, <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50071982?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=ecology&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50071982?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=ecology&first=1&max_to_show=10)>.

<sup>4</sup> Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 16.

Of course, ecology also has contemporary implications as a political (or politicised) and social discipline. The term is widely considered synonymous with environmentalism, the political movement that strives to protect the environment, and humanity's place within it. Raymond Williams noted the evolution of the term: "Ecology is a more general social concern, but at first the commonest word for such concern with the human and natural habitat was *environmentalism*. Actually *environmentalism* had been more specific, as the doctrine of the influence of physical surroundings on development."<sup>5</sup> In a way, "environmentalist criticism" may be a more accurate term than ecocriticism, as environmentalism's concerns are related to the environment and the way the environment and humans interact. Ecocriticism, despite Rueckert's initial proposal, remains focused on the human-nature relationship, rather than bringing ecological science to literary analysis.

The perceived nature-culture divide is the most complicated issue related to ecocriticism. Throughout this introduction, and indeed the entirety of this thesis, I engage both directly and obliquely with this issue. I examine this perceived rift through Shakespearean performance, arguing that nature and culture are not the polar opposites they are sometimes supposed to be. Williams, himself something of a proto-ecocritic, noted that the root words of culture "had a range of meanings: inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship."<sup>6</sup> He continued, "The primary meaning was then in husbandry, the tending of natural growth. Culture in all its early uses was a noun of process: the tending *of* something."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the word nature has a complex background. Williams drew a comparison between nature and culture saying that they are two important words "which began as descriptions of a quality or process, immediately

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 111.

<sup>6</sup> Williams 87.

<sup>7</sup> Williams 87.



defined by a specific reference, but later became independent nouns.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it is in the interactions between nature and culture, in the overlap areas where the distinction between the two (if one even exists) melts into the background that ecocriticism finds its home. It is in this middle ground, the place where art (culture) and environment (nature) collide that this thesis is situated.

Rueckert’s foundational ecocritical text acknowledges that ecology is both a science and a political standpoint, and while the precedent motivation for his “experiment” in reading was certainly his green political views, his critical apparatus is entrenched in scientific ecology, drawing predominantly on two ecological theories. The first he quotes from Barry Commoner’s 1972 study *The Closing Circle*<sup>9</sup> and is known as the first law of ecology: “Everything is connected to everything else.”<sup>10</sup> This is the principal hypothesis of ecology. The connections, the relationships between things, are the focus of ecological study. This first law can be problematic in that it allows for a vast array of potential topics for study. If everything is connected to everything else, from the global scale to the microscopic level, then ecology will never even make a dent in the study of these relationships. The first law also causes a problem in terms of the varied types of relationships that can be studied ecologically. Ecology tends to focus on specific, troubled connections, in order to better understand the complex nature of the problems that plague a specific locality, and potentially to grasp what consequences intervention and renewed husbandry could have on such relationships. This problem with the first law similarly plagues ecological literary criticism, and the discipline remains mired in its attempt to define its own methodology and field of study.

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<sup>8</sup> Williams 219.

<sup>9</sup> Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> Rueckert 108.

Rueckert used this law as his foundation for ecocriticism, proposing to study the connections between literature and the natural world. Unfortunately, this aim is vague and vast, and the single paragraph case studies in Rueckert's article reveal little more about his methodology. He focused on six varied texts ranging from Adrienne Rich, to Walt Whitman, to William Faulkner. The scope of the article prevents Rueckert from examining any in depth, and he tends to look almost exclusively at representations of nature in these works, but he does provide some interesting material that could inspire further discourse on these texts. His varied choice of material suggests that Rueckert's vision for ecocriticism was not as a tool for looking solely at "nature writing," but as a critical approach to poetry or prose, literature or painting. In a comment that partially inspired this thesis, Rueckert proposes the notion that theatrical performance is ideal ground for ecocriticism: "Drama should be our model or paradigm for literature because a drama, enacted upon the stage, before a live audience, releases its energy into the human community assembled in the theatre and raises all the energy levels."<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, it would be more than a decade before ecocriticism turned its eyes toward drama, and Rueckert does not develop his performance theory in any detail. Nevertheless, his notion that performance is fertile ground for ecocritical study is important, and suggests that ecocriticism can examine more than just representations of nature in art. Rueckert's idea of energy has little to do with the subject of the play or the role of nature in it. Rather, he highlights theatre as an art form that disperses artistic energy in a particularly ecological manner. The complex relationships Rueckert notes between art and audience, and the mutually enriching flow of energy in performance, remain paramount to any idea of theatrical ecology.

The conceptualisation of energy-flow derives from the second ecological theory Rueckert employs: the second law of thermodynamics, or the "one-way flow of energy." As Rueckert

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<sup>11</sup> Rueckert 110.

elucidates it, this theory states that “energy is never created or destroyed: it is only transformed, degraded, or dispersed, flowing always from a concentrated form into a dispersed (entropic) form.”<sup>12</sup> He argues that this works differently in relation to works of art and the human community than in, for instance, forests, claiming that in the art-human system “all energy comes from the creative imagination” and, unlike natural units, this “energy is not just used once, converted, and lost from the human community.”<sup>13</sup> Rather, he argues, the energy that is stored in a work of art (potential energy) can be “used over and over again as a renewable resource by the same individual.”<sup>14</sup> Kershaw modifies this view by arguing that theatre can only remain a renewable energy source by remaining an open system: in other words, by allowing the inflow of new energy sources. He says,

The more it becomes a closed system the more its entropy will increase in accord with the second law of thermodynamics...and so the more it will add to the overall disorder and degradation of the universe. Theatre may combat tendencies to closure in many ways, but among the most important is for it to become what ecologists call an “ecotone”, a place where two or more ecologies meet and mingle, such as, say, riverbanks, seashores and deep-sea volcanic vents. Ecotones often produce new hybrid life-forms as a result of the “edge effects” characteristic of the meeting of ecosystems. Some theatre ecotones are more successful in this respect than others because they have strong “negative feedback” loops, self-correcting warning systems that ensure no over-use of resources occurs which will make them less sustainable, more prone to entropy.<sup>15</sup>

An individual can recall the sensations of being in the theatre and experiencing the play and thus reuse the energy that was distributed during the performance. A communal response, such as laughter, applause, silence, is often sought by actors and directors, and actors frequently speak of the energy they receive from the reactions of an audience. Theatre inevitably produces both a communal and an individual response to energy. The most important point in Kershaw’s argument is that the theatre must remain open to new forms, new ideas, new plays, and even new

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<sup>12</sup> Rueckert 109.

<sup>13</sup> Rueckert 109.

<sup>14</sup> Rueckert 109.

<sup>15</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 18-19.

audiences in order to prevent itself from becoming a closed system, and to keep its energy flowing. Rueckert argues that finding a way to relate this flow of artistic energy to the natural world is the ultimate goal of ecocriticism. He leaves it to future generations of ecocritics to iron out the details of the discipline, but his central experiment, bringing ecological science to the study of literature, remains the foundation of ecocritical practice.

While he did not use the term ecocriticism, Joseph W. Meeker wrote the first monograph on literature and ecology two years before Rueckert's article.<sup>16</sup> Early in the book, Meeker outlines a detailed definition of ecocriticism. He writes,

Literary Ecology, then, is the study of biological themes and relationships that appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles literature has played in the ecology of the human species... Literary form must be reconciled if possible with the forms and structures of nature as they are defined by scientific ecologists... Characters in literature may also be analyzed as typical or atypical representatives of the human species, and their behavior compared to patterns of behavior among other animals... Philosophical ideas defining the relationship between humanity and nature are often expressed or implied in literary works... literary ecology makes it possible to study the function of literary art as it influences the survival and well-being of the human species.<sup>17</sup>

Meeker's primary concern is with literary form; his argument, as the title implies, focuses on comedy as a form ecologically superior to tragedy. As the book develops, he further distinguishes between pastoral comedy and picaresque, arguing in favour of the latter, and he especially focuses on the picaro as the character type representing the best literary example of human ecological adaptation and survival.

Meeker's book is highly personal, recounting the lives of his grandfathers and the development of his own career and his environmentalism. This is a trend in ecocritical studies: the critic often establishes his or her own green credentials through personal commentary,

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<sup>16</sup> Originally published *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974); quotes are from *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and a Play Ethic*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Meeker 7.

leading many studies to read more like essays than scholarly or critical articles. Despite Meeker's insistence on tying literary criticism to scientific ecology, he introduces few ecological concepts other than a general knowledge of evolutionary biology, and makes no systematic study of his literature. In fact, he chooses primary texts seemingly at random to back up his personal sense, which is that "play" is an evolutionary imperative for beings with higher brain function (ranging from birds and fish to higher primates including humans). His argument focuses on how ethological studies, or the study of animal behaviour, can help explain human behaviour as he sees it revealed through the characters in his chosen texts. He concludes that humans must get back to a more playful way of existence in order to stem the tide of ecological devastation, and that we can find models for such behaviour in certain literary texts. Meeker summarizes his main argument thus:

The comic way is to be found in evolutionary history, in the processes of ecology, and in comic literature, which may represent the closest we have come to describing humans as adaptive animals. Comedy illustrates that survival depends upon our ability to change ourselves rather than our environment, and upon our ability to accept limitations rather than to curse fate for limiting us.<sup>18</sup>

Meeker's great strength is in accepting the fact that humans are animals, and his work "grants us our animal being, relishes the materiality of the everyday world, [and] concerns itself with the business of living and reproducing."<sup>19</sup> While he by no means employs a strong critical apparatus in his study, he insists that any form of ecocriticism must erode the "difference" applied to the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

These are by no means the only texts from the late 1970s to apply ecology to literary criticism, but Rueckert's coining of the word ecocriticism and Meeker's status as the author of the first book-length study make them important to understanding early efforts for an ecological

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<sup>18</sup> Meeker 21.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2000) 180.

study of literature. For this thesis, Rueckert's efforts to bring elements of ecological science to literary criticism, and Meeker's notion of play as essential to human-nature coexistence are essential methodological components that will be discussed further in the next chapter. Meeker's book was published in a second edition in 1980,<sup>20</sup> after which ecocriticism "lay dormant in critical vocabulary" for nearly a decade.<sup>21</sup> It was revived at the 1989 Western Literature Association meeting, and entered the critical consciousness in the United States, taking a few more years to make an impact in Britain. There are now branches of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) around the world, including English-language journals published in the United States (*ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*) and in the United Kingdom (*Green Letters*). Ecocriticism has now developed sufficiently to warrant a chapter in the second edition of Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory* textbook,<sup>22</sup> a book in Routledge's New Critical Idiom series,<sup>23</sup> as well as numerous anthologies of critical material.<sup>24</sup> The expansion of ecocriticism has led to combinations with several other critical viewpoints connecting the study of literature and ecology with fields such as ecofeminism and eco-Marxism. Despite the rapid expansion of ecocriticism, the field remains mired in the broadness of scope and the vagueness of critical method that plagued Rueckert's

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph W. Meeker, *The Comedy of Survival: In Search of an Environmental Ethic* (Los Angeles: Guild of Tutors, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> Michael P. Branch, "Introduction," *Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice*, Western Literature Association Meeting, Salt Lake City, 6 Oct. 1994; reprinted on Association for the Study of Literature and Environment website: <[http://www.asle.umn.edu/conf/other\\_conf/wla/1994/1994.html](http://www.asle.umn.edu/conf/other_conf/wla/1994/1994.html)>.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, New Critical Idiom Series (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic, eds., *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998); Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells, eds., *Writing the Environment: ecocriticism and literature* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998); John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington, eds., *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000); Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, eds., *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2001); John Parham, ed., *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), to name a few.

initial study. One need only skim Dana Phillips's *The Truth of Ecology*<sup>25</sup> to understand the widespread problems created by what Cheryll Glotfelty, editor of an early and influential ecocritical anthology, calls the "disparate levels of sophistication" within ecocriticism.<sup>26</sup> What follows is a survey of some of the definitions of ecocriticism developed by what Lawrence Buell calls the "second-wave" or "revisionist" group of ecocritics (i.e. those writing since the renaissance of the field in the early 1990s)<sup>27</sup> in order to develop a better understanding of what "ecocriticism" *can* mean.

One of the problems with defining ecocriticism is that, according to Buell, it "lacks the kind of paradigm-defining statement that, for example, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) supplied" for colonial/postcolonial studies, leading Buell to conclude, "More like (say) feminism in this respect, ecocriticism gathers itself around a commitment to environmentality from whatever critical vantage point."<sup>28</sup> The lack of a "paradigm-defining" moment in ecocriticism is not owing to a lack of effort. After all, Michael P. Branch's comment (quoted above) regarding the dormancy of ecocriticism is from a conference titled "Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice," and nearly every anthology in the field begins with an introduction either attempting to define ecocriticism or rejecting the need for a rigid definition of methodological principles. In fact, Buell's comparison of ecocriticism with feminist criticism is not unique. Cheryll Glotfelty, in her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, makes the same argument:

What then *is* ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings

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<sup>25</sup> Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996) xix.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 30.

<sup>28</sup> Buell, *The Future* 11.

an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.<sup>29</sup>

In their introduction to *Reading Under the Sign of Nature*, Tallmadge and Harrington echo Glotfelty's words:

Reading "under the sign of nature" – that is, with regard to the natural world and its concerns – can enrich our understanding of literary works and their importance for culture and human ecology. Like feminism, ecocriticism is really less a method than an attitude, an angle of vision, and a mode of critique.<sup>30</sup>

One may question the possibility of a "mode of critique" without a methodology. Suffice to say, these revisionist ecocritics remain caught up in the issues of methodology that I find so problematic in early ecocritics like Rueckert and Meeker. The definitions I have cited imply that it is acceptable for ecocriticism to be a politically-inspired attitude toward literature that values the planet and its more-than-human inhabitants rather than a true critical discipline. After all, as Terry Gifford points out, "A personal notion of nature will always be in dialectical relation to socially constructed notions of nature."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in a critical sense, a personal response to literature will always be in dialogue with various, mostly cultural, constructions which influence our ideas of literature. In other words, we will always personally respond to a work of art, much as we respond to the natural world individually. However, these responses are always influenced by cultural constructions. The personal response and the surrounding cultural attitudes toward both nature and a work of art are always in dialogue with each other, and according to these definitions of ecocriticism, it is the expression of that dialogue that is the goal of ecocriticism. These are the borderlands, where two "ecologies" meet in an ecotone: art (culture) on the one hand, and environment (nature) on the other, but inexorably tied together and reliant upon one

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<sup>29</sup> Glotfelty xvii.

<sup>30</sup> John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington, "Introduction," *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*, eds. John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000) ix.

<sup>31</sup> Terry Gifford, "The Social Construction of Nature," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 3.2 (Fall 1996) 33.



another. The personal response to art or nature is always culturally influenced, and the cultural response, or communal response, is always made up of individuals. The two are not mutually exclusive, but in fact mutually sustaining. Williams, in his study of the word “criticism” said,

The point would then be, not to find some other term to replace it, while continuing the same kind of activity, but to get rid of the habit, which depends, fundamentally, on the abstraction of response from its real situation and circumstances: the elevation to “judgment”, and to an apparently general process, when what always needs to be understood is the specificity of the response, which is not an abstract “judgment” but even where including, as often necessarily, positive or negative responses, a definite practice, in active and complex relations with its whole situation and context.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, we do not need to rid the world of critical practice, per se, but to rid critical practice of its abstraction, and one way to do this is to plant it within its environment. Ecocritics, as critics, need to understand that it is not simply a matter of art or nature, but of art *and* nature, nature *and* art.

One essential assumption of ecocritics is that the natural world is very much a physical reality. Ecocriticism rejects the idea, propounded by poststructuralism and postmodernism, that everything is a cultural/linguistic construction. While our attitude toward nature is culturally constructed, and the way we discuss and describe the natural world is necessarily linguistic, the environment truly exists. It physically surrounds and envelops us, we are a part of it and interact with it, and parts of the natural world that we have yet to discover exist without our knowledge and independent of our constructing influence. Greg Garrard confronts this assumption saying, “The challenge for ecocritics is to keep one eye on the ways in which ‘nature’ is always in some ways culturally constructed, and the other on the fact that nature really exists, both the object and, albeit distantly, the origin of our discourse.”<sup>33</sup> The relationship between humanity and nature is, in fact, mutually constructing. We construct our environment, not only through

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<sup>32</sup> Williams 86.

<sup>33</sup> Garrard 10.

physical alterations to the land, but also through our ideas relating to nature. At the same time, our environment shapes and constructs us. Buell calls this “mutual constructionism.” It is the pattern of the “physical environment (both natural and human-built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it.”<sup>34</sup> This thesis studies the ways performances (cultural, human) both shape our notions of the environment, and are shaped by the environment itself.

Oddly, despite his status as a literary and theatrical icon, and despite the efforts of ecocriticism to broaden its horizons, little ecocritical attention has been paid to Shakespeare. This is even more surprising considering the important work done on Shakespeare by feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial critics, critical fields linked to ecocriticism by the fact that they are motivated by political and moral/ethical viewpoints. Why has ecocriticism so far failed to see the potential richness of Shakespeare’s work? It may be a matter of history. Much ecocritical work only extends historically to the Romantics in Britain and the Transcendentalists in America; to writers working in industrialised or rapidly industrialising societies. Shakespeare lived decidedly before the Industrial Revolution, so the early environmental crises to which the aforementioned literary movements responded were yet to exist. It is easy to see Shakespeare as writing in a pre-Industrial “Golden Age” in which, though human-caused environmental problems did exist, they were nowhere near the scale of the crises caused by industrialisation. However, this is not necessarily true, as shown by a number of cultural historians writing on nature and early modern society.<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare knew of the enclosure of public lands, of

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (London: Belknap, 2001) 6.

<sup>35</sup> To name a few examples: Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London and New York: Penguin, 1983); Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

deforestation to support agriculture and imperial expansion, and of an over-populated urban centre clogged with atmospheric pollution. This is not to say that the environmental problems of early modern times were anywhere near the problems that we face today, but they did exist in early form as Shakespeare wrote.

Another possible explanation for the lack of ecocritical focus on Shakespeare is his perceived place in the development of Renaissance humanism. His individualistic, humanist characters have encouraged some to read Shakespeare's plays as virtually a bible for early modern humanism, notably Harold Bloom. Numerous natural historians and philosophers trace the anthropocentric worldview, which they blame for modern environmental crises, to the development of the humanist tradition during the Renaissance.<sup>36</sup> The problem with these two lines of thinking is that Shakespeare's plays, while written in a specific era, continue to be revived as literature and in performance in the modern world. While a historical reading of attitudes toward nature as expressed in his plays may be interesting, and a worthy and difficult task, that is not the point of this study. Shakespeare remains a part of the culture of today, constantly transformed, reworked, and adapted to fit different perspectives and a different world. The issue of adaptation, a key concept to this thesis and my ecocritical methodology, will be further explored in the next chapter. It is in understanding the place of Shakespeare in the modern world that critical views such as feminism, Marxism, and postcolonialism have found his works such fertile ground for study and debate. It is in this vein that I employ the methods of ecocriticism, as a modern tool for studying works that are still a part of the modern world.

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example: Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155.3767, new series (10 March 1967) 1203-1207; Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, *The Mastery of Nature: Aspects of Art, Science, and Humanism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

I turn, then, to a brief examination of the few works of ecocriticism that have been dedicated at least in some part to Shakespeare's work in order to determine the main lines of enquiry. For the purposes of this preliminary discussion, I omit several studies that include sections on Shakespeare because they predate ecocriticism, and/or because they focus on cultural-historical perspectives. Northrop Frye's work,<sup>37</sup> Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*,<sup>38</sup> and Linda Woodbridge's *The Scythe of Saturn*<sup>39</sup> stand out amongst these omissions, but such works will be utilised in relation to the specific case studies that make up the bulk of this thesis. I begin chronologically with Albert Labriola's "Environmental Shakespeare."<sup>40</sup> This article sets out several tenets at its outset:

For Shakespeare, the natural environment is the setting in which the speeches, actions, and inner conflicts of characters acquire more profound significance. Shakespeare's use of the seasons, moreover, highlights not only the descriptive details of spring and winter but also the symbolic value associated with the respective settings in which emergent life is celebrated and imminent death is anticipated.<sup>41</sup>

In his reading, Labriola sees Shakespeare taking dramatic power from nature to enhance his plays. He also sees a seasonal cycle within the plays that is closely linked to the pastoral tradition. Labriola recounts his arrival at this view through Laurence Olivier's film of *Hamlet*, specifically the actor-director's use of the coastal landscape to enhance and symbolise the character's inner turmoil during the famous "To be, or not to be" speech, however he never returns to performance as the mode for transmission of ecological meaning. Labriola provides

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<sup>37</sup> Especially *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965).

<sup>38</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>39</sup> Linda Woodbridge, *The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Albert C. Labriola, "Environmental Shakespeare," *M.V. Rama Sarma: His Mind and Art*, ed. K. Venkata Reddy (New Delhi: Prestige, 1995) 28-42. Many thanks to Professor Labriola for sending me a copy of this article as the book is not available from any known source in the U.S. or U.K.

<sup>41</sup> Labriola 28.

several brief readings of various plays that similarly suggest that Shakespeare uses the natural environment as a device for reflecting and enhancing the human drama within the plays.

The “instrumentalism” Labriola finds in the plays, the idea that Shakespeare simply uses the natural world for anthropocentric purposes, is understandable, and there is evidence for such a reading. However, this is not a cause for celebration, as Labriola seems to think. Rather, it suggests that the natural world may inspire and help shape Shakespeare’s worlds, but the environment remains little more than a sounding board or a dramatic backdrop for Shakespeare. This suggestion grows more intense as Labriola discusses the tragedies, concluding that in these plays, “Humankind’s vices and degeneracy produce an adverse effect in the environment. From this perspective, the environment becomes an allegorical landscape wherein humankind views the enactment and consequences of self-destructive impulses.”<sup>42</sup> In a way, Labriola’s statement makes sense. If we understand that the dangerous actions of Shakespeare’s characters damage their environment, then we should be able to see the same thing happening in our world. However, the environment is not an “allegorical landscape” but a physical reality, one that is actually damaged by our “self-destructive impulses.” Labriola fails in the article to expand his argument out of Shakespeare’s plays into the greater world, one of the goals of ecocriticism, and he also fails to acknowledge that Shakespeare’s work is not self-consciously ecological. The environments that Shakespeare may have imagined encompassing his plays never existed apart from in his mind, as the plays were performed on a mostly empty stage without a backdrop to indicate varying locations. While some of the descriptive passages in Shakespeare’s plays may be indicative of the man’s ideas, it is impossible to understand them without acknowledging their dramatic use on a blank early modern stage or in reference to specific modern productions. This sense is missing from Labriola and leaves his argument incomplete and conjectural. More

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<sup>42</sup> Labriola 41.

interesting than analysing these four hundred year old descriptions, I believe, is evaluating how modern directors and designers make these moments come alive on stage and screen.

Much of the ecocritical work that looks at Shakespeare tends to focus on the later plays, *The Tempest* more than any other. In the 1998 anthology *Reading the Earth*, Paula Willoquet-Maricondi's article goes beyond Shakespeare's work, looking at two modern adaptations of *The Tempest* as ecological revisions of the play.<sup>43</sup> While this work is more relevant to my later discussion of *The Tempest* in performance (particularly chapter six), it introduces one important concept of ecocriticism to the present discussion. In relation to Derek Jarman's film *Prospero's Books* and Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* she writes,

These works examine the effects of *displacement* on both Being and Environment by reprioritizing the interconnectedness and interdependency of Self and Place. Both artists manipulate the Shakespearean text in order to suggest a new "ethic of being" founded on the "recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place."<sup>44</sup>

The idea of *place* is vitally important to ecocritical discourse. However, there is a long history of philosophical examination of this concept, especially in relation to the related term *space*, that is often overlooked in ecocriticism. It is important to briefly examine the space-place crux before moving into an ideology of place as it can be applied in ecocriticism.

While many thinkers present an oppositional relationship between space and place similar to that set up between nature and culture, it has become increasingly accepted that one cannot exist without the other. Yi-Fu Tuan provides a concise explication of this, saying, "In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place... What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The

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<sup>43</sup> Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, "Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* as Ecological Rereading and Rewritings of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment*, eds. Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1998) 209-224.

<sup>44</sup> Willoquet-Maricondi 209 (original emphasis); quotation from Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 8.

ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition.”<sup>45</sup> Space is widely considered an unknown, and perhaps unknowable, quality or location. It can be a void, but it is all around us, it contains us, and it environs the places that we can come to know and endow with value. It is the impact of human experience that makes space into place, or, as Tuan suggests, “When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place.”<sup>46</sup> However, other philosophers feel that such conceptions of place make it subordinate to space. J.E. Malpas argues that the “human response” definition of place in relation to space is inadequate because “it provides no real explication of the concept of place as such” and instead focuses simply on subjective human emotional experience.<sup>47</sup> He continues,

The connection between any particular space and certain emotional qualities associated with that space could turn out to be completely contingent – there is no reason to suppose that it is the experience of specifically topographic or even spatial qualities that are actually at issue in such an experience of place. The association of some set of felt qualities with a particular space may be no more than a product of the triggering of particular responses – perhaps in a completely accidental fashion – by some combination of physical, and for this reason alone, spatially located surroundings.<sup>48</sup>

In order to reassert the primacy of place in an experiential philosophy, Malpas concludes that it is not experience that creates place out of space, but that “*place is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience.*”<sup>49</sup> What none of these philosophers even touch on, however, is whether or not nature draws any distinction between place and space. Is this perceived rift merely an invention of the mind (“Nothing is but thinking makes it so”)? Or, is there any physical, natural distinction between space and place?

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<sup>45</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 6.

<sup>46</sup> Tuan 73.

<sup>47</sup> J.E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 30.

<sup>48</sup> Malpas 30.

<sup>49</sup> Malpas 32 (original emphasis).

Edward S. Casey, one of the paramount philosophers of place, sheds some light on the subject without delving further into the nearly unfathomable depths of philosophical investigation on the subject. He echoes Buell's notion of mutual constructionism by blurring the suggested boundary between nature and culture, and by suggesting that place relies on human experience, but that human experience relies on place. He says,

Places are [...] primary in the order of culture. Just as there can be no disembodied experience of landscape, so there can be no unimplaced cultures. If "things that exist are somewhere," among these existing things are human cultures; they too are in place. Thus we are driven to acknowledge the truth of two related but distinct propositions: just as every place is encultured, so every culture is implaced.<sup>50</sup>

It is not within the scope of this thesis to resolve the issues that comprise the crux where space and place meet. It may be, as Casey suggests, that place is a necessary aspect of culture, and vice versa. So, while space may presuppose place, it is necessary to understand that we are in culture, and hence we must speak of place. Even an unknown, seemingly featureless space (the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the Sahara desert, Antarctica) has certain culturally-constructed preconceptions, and cultured inhabitants, that make it place. Especially important for this project is to understand Casey's concept of "implacement" and how it can lead to an ecological understanding of a work. For Willoquet-Maricondi's work, these two adaptations highlight the constructing/constructive relationship between self and place, and also the effect of displacing an older work for a new purpose. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is literally removed from its place and given a new place in the world by the adapting artists.

In her formulation, displacement can lead reflexively to a better understanding of place. Partially, this is because displacement is not being without place, but being in a different and unfamiliar place. As Casey suggests,

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<sup>50</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) 31.



To exist at all as a (material or mental) object or as an (experienced or observed) event is to have a place – *to be implaced*, however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily. For this to be so, the object or event need not be well formed, regular, or predictable. Even Chaos has a shape and a place into which that shape fits.<sup>51</sup>

The understanding of the relationship between one's self and one's place, or to conversely understand place's hold over one's self, especially within a cultural framework, is paramount to an ecological understanding of the world. As Casey reminds us, the fact of displacement is a part of the mobility of modern life. It is not just refugees of wars or natural disasters who understand the feeling of displacement, but nearly every human being who moves around in this world. Casey suggests that both humans and nonhuman animals spend much of their lives in the modern world looking for a way of "maintaining the stability and security of a home-place or home-region as defined by an appropriate 'biotope' or 'ecological niche.'"<sup>52</sup> An understanding of our place ties us to the land, enters us into an ecological relationship with our locale. Art can represent not only place, but things-in-place. The investigation of representations of placedness, whether in literature, theatre, painting, or any other artform, is paramount to an ecocritical study. I further discuss the method by which I approach an investigation of place in the next chapter.

Ecocriticism examines certain types of places and their existence in literature, and the resulting effect of such (re)presented/created places on the work of art. In a study of representations of islands in literature, Jean Arnold does just this in relation to *The Tempest*. Arnold's central argument is that "human interaction with natural surroundings, spaces, and places consistently produces meaning," and so, "When writers include the 'temporal shapes' of nature in their works, these architectonic geographical formations are able to lend their forms to

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<sup>51</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 13 (original emphasis).

<sup>52</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place* xii.

the structure of ideas or meanings that unfold in literature.”<sup>53</sup> One small problem with Arnold’s formulation is that an island ceases to be purely a “temporal shape” once it is inhabited. Rather, it becomes a place, and the inhabitants no longer exist simply in space and time, but in place as well. Even when we are not discussing a *real* island, but an imaginary one, such as Prospero’s realm, the imprint of the place is clear on the characters that inhabit the island (Prospero, Miranda, Caliban, Ariel), as well as on the efforts to understand their new place which drives the shipwrecked nobility (Ferdinand, Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio, etc.). So the fact that the play occurs on an island is vital not only to the plot, but to the central motivations of the characters as well. If this were not an island, the play would lose its form and drift into placelessness. This is why, perhaps, the theatrical representation of the island landscape is so central to a director’s conception of the play, an idea that will be further examined in the final part of this thesis. Arnold never quite follows the argument through to this conclusion, however, resolving that Shakespeare used the island landscape “to explore methods of good and bad government and to show that dream may become reality on an island.”<sup>54</sup> This simplified understanding of *The Tempest* ignores much of the plot and many of the underlying currents within the play.

Prospero’s island is not a mere mindscape, but a theatrical setting in which various interactions occur between character and environment. The island is not just a geographic formation that creates meaning in the play, it is the basis for the play, the *terra firma* on which *The Tempest* stands and without which it would not exist. Meanings that arise on the island are myriad: it is the realm of Prospero, usurped from Caliban, on which the two struggle for power and control in a telling colonial confrontation; it is the home of spirits and airs who can harness

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<sup>53</sup> Jean Arnold, “Mapping Island Mindscapes: The Literary and Cultural Uses of a Geographical Formation,” *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*, eds. John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000) 26.

<sup>54</sup> J. Arnold 29.

the power of nature itself; it can even be understood as the theatre itself. The thrust stage of Shakespeare's era, surrounded as it was by a sea of spectators, physically resembled an island. Reading the theatre as an island, and the island as the theatrical place in which the various meanings of *The Tempest* unfold, it is not surprising that so many like to think of the play as Shakespeare's theatrical swansong. Like an island, the theatre can be the place for a vast array of cultural formulations. Arnold concludes,

To read the natural world is to understand that cultural memory and ideology are so enmeshed in the landscape that there is no way – or reason – to think of nature and culture separately. Islands supply the means to imagine realities that give expression and regenerative energy to cultural life: they collaborate as associates in the creation of meaning.<sup>55</sup>

While Arnold's understanding of the play may be incomplete, this conclusion is a strong statement of the idea that culture and nature are mutually constructing. An island can be considered as space, as a blank canvas onto which meaning can be inscribed. It can also be a place/space from which the inhabitants (permanent or temporary) can learn more about themselves. It can also, as Arnold suggests, reinfuse energy into an eco-cultural community, staving off the entropy that exists in all natural systems according to the second law of thermodynamics.

Jonathan Bate's *The Song of the Earth* includes a more complex reading of *The Tempest* in relation to Césaire's *Une Tempête* than these examples have thus far provided. Bate reads the latter as embodying the concept of *négritude*, giving a voice to the Other through a revision of the character of Caliban, but also as a potential catalyst "for an imagining of the voice...of the ravaged earth itself."<sup>56</sup> Bate acknowledges that the concept of imagining a voice for the Other is a complex and difficult task, especially for the white male critic. It is the difficulty of this task

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<sup>55</sup> J. Arnold 33.

<sup>56</sup> Bate, *Song* 80.

that leads Bate, inspired by Césaire's revision of Caliban, to seek for a voice for Ariel. He writes,

Having acknowledged the ecopoetic force of *négritude*, the white reader must be wary of appropriating a language that is not his own, of doubly speaking on behalf of the Other. The male practitioner of ecofeminist reading faces the same problem. So in thinking about a rereading of *The Tempest* in terms of culture and nature, it may be wise for the reader who is perforce a troubled Prosperian to follow an alternative track and consider an improvisation on the voice of Ariel – that voice which was silenced by late twentieth-century criticism's interest in Caliban.<sup>57</sup>

Being a “troubled Prosperian” means understanding one's own role in the subjugation of the earth to human need. Following Bate's alternative path, following the path Prospero sets at the end of the play, allows us to set Ariel, nature, free.

Prospero is the colonising, white, humanist male who considers Ariel, and by extension nature, something to be controlled. The character's project is to use his magical control over nature – which Bate reads as analogous to modern technology, following Leo Marx in his *Machine in the Garden* – to bring his enemies into a deeper understanding of themselves morally – read as the project of Enlightenment humanism. This instrumentalist view of nature, whether attributable to Enlightenment thinkers or not, is precisely what any environmentally-attuned study must reject. Bate confronts and responds to Prospero's anthropocentrism by pointing to the conclusion of the play, which he says is “there as an image of the possibility of renunciation of the claim to mastery and possession of nature. We don't know where Caliban goes at the end of the play, but we do know that Ariel is free and that the island will be his again.”<sup>58</sup> The ability to renounce his control, the freeing of Ariel, is Prospero's salvation in terms of the human-nature relationship, as his forgiveness of his enemies redeems him in relation to the human interests of the play. Bate's book has a wider scope than reading *The Tempest*: it moves between a

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<sup>57</sup> Bate, *Song* 89.

<sup>58</sup> Bate, *Song* 92.

historicist reading that delves into the roots of our modern environmental crises, and a modern view that examines how works of art are placed in the relationships between humankind and the environment in a world that is wracked by the crises caused by these relationships. At the conclusion of his reading of Shakespeare's and Césaire's works, Bate brings his reading into direct conflict with an instrumentalist view of nature. He writes, "In our twenty-first century, we need to treasure the memory or the myth of an island which Prospero has left, an ecosystem which man is content to leave alone. Postcolonialism has restored a voice to Caliban. Ecopoetics asks us to imagine that Ariel can be set free."<sup>59</sup> While Bate's work is obviously instrumental to my thesis, it is surprising that he never recognized the importance of performance to an ecological imagining of *The Tempest*. A modern staging, in its ability to adapt the play for new times and audiences, can tell us where Caliban goes and how the relationship between Prospero and Ariel is resolved. This, again, will be further explored in the final part of this thesis.

The second edition of Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory* book includes a section on ecocriticism in which he sketches a brief reading of *King Lear*. His point is not to provide a complete reading of the play, nor to add to the critical understanding of *King Lear*, but to draw attention to the way ecocritics read – from outer to inner. According to Barry, this means that "what had seemed mere 'setting' is brought in from the critical margins to the critical centre (so that, among other things, the storm *is* a storm, and not just a metaphor for the turmoil in Lear's mind)."<sup>60</sup> The disputed reading of the storm as metaphor for Lear's internal madness makes little sense in that the storm affects him and others around him (a point especially clear in performance), and when reading the storm in context with its surrounding scenes (Lear's

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<sup>59</sup> Bate, *Song* 93.

<sup>60</sup> Barry 259.

madness continues even after the storm has ended). He makes little suggestion of how to read from outside-in, and provides no methodology for his own reading. Barry makes the point that part of the purpose of such a reading is to provide a new perspective, making ecocriticism's rereadings of canonical works rebellious and challenging. Barry fails, however, to take into account the fact that the plays on the page are given physicality in performance which can change the way a certain moment in the play can be understood from an ecological perspective.

It is clear from the works I have surveyed that ecocriticism has only just begun to make its mark on Shakespeare studies, and Simon Estok's contribution to the 2003 anthology *Shakespeare Matters*<sup>61</sup> furthers this claim, though he focuses on pedagogy and is light on ecocritical theory. These studies paved the way for the only ecocritical monograph dedicated to Shakespeare thus far, Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare: From ecopolitics to ecocriticism*.<sup>62</sup> Egan's book is an ambitious project, with in-depth readings of ten plays that attempt "to show that our understanding of Shakespeare and our understanding of Green politics have overlapping concerns and can be mutually sustaining."<sup>63</sup> Largely through historical investigation, Egan ties many of the ideologies of the modern environmental movement to the thinking about the natural world as he understands it to be revealed in Shakespeare's plays. This is more an "eco-historical" perspective than an eco-critical one, often ignoring the centuries of philosophical and scientific advancement between Shakespeare's time and ours. He works frequently through analogy, understanding, for example, the human body as a microcosmic analogue for the macrocosmic world, a view that no doubt had some sway in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but is no longer tenable with advances in modern medicine. In relation to *Coriolanus* and the vast array of

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<sup>61</sup> Simon C. Estok, "Teaching the Environment of *The Winter's Tale*: Ecocritical Theory and Pedagogy for Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 2003) 177-190.

<sup>62</sup> Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: From ecopolitics to ecocriticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>63</sup> Egan, *Green* 1.

body imagery in the play, Egan claims, “Our bodies are structured just like the wider cosmos, which is of course an essential Green insight lost in recent Shakespeare criticism.”<sup>64</sup> However effective the analogy of body-world may be, even in our modern society, it is simply not true, and any ecocritic who argues along such lines fails to understand the difference between analogy and fact. No “Green” critique that has its basis in ecological science would consider the idea that “our bodies are structured just like the wider cosmos” to be an “insight.” It is, again, a valid analogy, but it is not scientifically accurate. On the other hand, the fact that our bodies are made up of the same materials as the rest of the cosmos is not only scientifically sound, but also encourages further thinking regarding the first law of ecology, and how everything is connected.

Part of the reason Egan’s arguments seem under-informed by scientific ecology is his reliance on E.M.W. Tillyard’s *The Elizabethan World Picture*<sup>65</sup> for his principal ideas about nature in Shakespeare’s society, and on James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis<sup>66</sup> for his ecological perspectives. While the former was, when published over sixty years ago, a ground-breaking study, it has since been updated and altered by further research, providing us with a more nuanced view of Elizabethan thinking than Tillyard was privy to. The latter is a far more controversial study, and warrants some attention, as Egan is not the only ecocritic to latch on to Lovelock’s theory and accept it as truth. Lovelock’s own definition of his hypothesis is that “the biosphere is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep our planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environment.”<sup>67</sup> Lovelock’s analysis of the earth is filled with anthropomorphic commentaries on the way “Gaia” feels its constituent parts and adjusts itself accordingly. He illuminates his model through the metaphor of Daisyworld. On this fictional

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<sup>64</sup> Egan, *Green* 66.

<sup>65</sup> E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943).

<sup>66</sup> J.E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A new look at life on Earth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>67</sup> Lovelock xii.

planet, only two species exist: white daisies and black daisies. According to Lovelock, planets naturally warm throughout their histories, so early in its life when Daisyworld is relatively cool it is a better environment for the black daisies, which absorb more sunlight thereby aiding the process of photosynthesis. The absorption of heat by the black flowers contributes to the warming of the planet, which also happens naturally (though how this fits into the Gaia hypothesis is never fully explained). Daisyworld gradually warms, becoming too hot for the heat-absorptive black daisies, and they begin to wither and die. Simultaneously, the planet becomes more hospitable to the white daisies, which eventually become the dominant species on the planet, and their reflection of sunlight helps to cool the world, thereby extending the life of the planet and its inhabiting Gaia spirit.

Lovelock's hypothesis is the largest example of the wide-reaching application of ecosystem theory, developed in the 1930s and 1940s by British biologist A.G. Tansley. Ecosystem ecology developed from the organismic holism of early ecology, and accepted that nature worked as a unified system that could be quantified and understood. Tansley applied the methods of mechanical systems analysis to natural phenomena to reveal generalised truths about the relationships in ecosystems. Robert P. McIntosh states that Tansley's theory was predicated upon "a hierarchy of systems" and that Tansley "specified that an ecosystem was one category of the range of systems between atom and universe; and although he identified the biome as an ecosystem, he allowed that ecosystems 'are of the most various kinds and sizes.'"<sup>68</sup> Current ecology does not reject the ecosystem concept, but accepts that nature does not work in a way that is analogous to a mechanical system. Chaos theory has been increasingly embraced by ecology, as many of the relationships in nature are based upon random occurrences and

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<sup>68</sup> Robert P. McIntosh, *The Background of Ecology: Concept and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 193.



happenstance convergences. Additionally, external pressures are more widely understood in current ecology: hydrological interchanges, geological alterations, and even the spread of pollution all impact even the smallest and most seemingly self-contained ecosystems. This has led to the term “bioregion,” which is more complete in its understanding of the way nature works, but still pushes ecologists toward a wide-ranging field of study that necessarily leads to the same sort of generalisations that Tansley’s original ecosystem models made.

Rather than focus on large systems simply for the sake of understanding them, many modern ecologists strive for specificity, especially in terms of understanding endangered ecological places. Dana Phillips, discussing the work of ecologist R.H. Peters, argues:

Peters insists (and ecocritics who want to restore representational art to its former glory ought to take notice) that the goal of ecology, especially at a time of global environmental crisis, should not be to generate a correct picture, complete in all its details, of the workings of ecosystems, but to explore ways in which particular environmental problems can be more effectively addressed and redressed.<sup>69</sup>

For Peters, it is not particularly important whether holistic systems analyses such as Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis are correct or not, since they do not help solve the environmental crisis. What Phillips is saying seems to be two-fold. First, representational art that accurately depicts the natural world is not the goal of ecocriticism. Second, that ecocritics should address the problem areas in art and in the interaction between art and environment. To paraphrase a catchphrase of the environmental movement, one cannot act on a global level, and so understanding a holistic global system is irrelevant to fixing the ecological-artistic relationships that are problematic. This goes to the heart of a problem in modern ecology which McIntosh describes as the “battleground between those urging a ‘hard science,’ reductionist, ‘imperial’ approach and those

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<sup>69</sup> Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* 75; reference to R.H. Peters, *A Critique for Ecology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

arguing a holistic, organismic, if not truly ‘arcadian,’ approach.”<sup>70</sup> As suggested by Phillips, this battleground necessarily affects ecocriticism as well, partitioning the field into those who cling to a holistic approach such as Egan, and those who embrace the specificity of current ecology.

Phillips develops his argument further, saying that science proves more and more that nature does not act systematically, so ecology becomes more specific, reductionist, and value-neutral in its approach, something he feels should also be applied in ecocriticism. As ecology discovers that individuality may take precedence over collectivity, that smaller samples are more enlightening for study than the entire biosphere, that nature is more chaotic than systematic, ecology moves toward being what Phillips calls a “science of patchiness.” He says,

What patchiness really means is that the idea that habitats are composed as all-encompassing ‘environments’ is false. Patchiness, random variation, pattern, or grain – ecologists use these words interchangeably, but call it what you will, patchiness frustrates our attempts to identify and understand natural systems as, well, natural *systems*. It threatens to reduce ecological research to patchwork. The irony, however, is that reducing ecology to patchwork may strengthen its claim to scientific validity in the eyes of the critics.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, ecology still uses the ecosystem model as its primary form, and still analyses natural systems as systems, while acknowledging that they are different types of systems than, say, mechanical ones. Similarly, for ecocritics, the application of vast, all-encompassing ideologies can be beneficial, so long as they are tempered by an understanding of the shortcoming in such works. For Egan, the similarities between the “Great Chain of Being” elucidated by Tillyard, and evidenced in Shakespeare’s plays, and Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis link the solution to our modern ecological crisis to an understanding of nature that was current four hundred years ago. However, even if Lovelock’s hypothesis is correct (a dubious possibility) it does not provide us with any form of solution. Gaia, the earth, the biosphere, may

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<sup>70</sup> McIntosh 17.

<sup>71</sup> Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* 79.

be able to consciously regulate itself, but if that is the case then its most logical course of action would be to eliminate most of the perpetrating species of environmental devastation, namely *homo sapiens*, from the planet. As Meeker suggested, one thing that is important to all species in the ecological game is survival, so an acceptance of Lovelock's theory would mean embracing our own destruction, but celebrating because the vast majority of life on earth would go on. In the end, what is important for ecocritics to understand is that ecological science may not always be applicable to literary analysis. This does not mean we need to abandon ecocriticism wholly, nor does it mean we can settle for out-of-date or dubious concepts.

What I am proposing in this thesis is the application of some of ecology's broader theories, like ecosystem analysis and the first law, to the study of Shakespeare's plays in performance. It is my fundamental assumption that modern performance of Shakespeare's plays is the artistic equivalent of an ecotone: a region where literary studies and performance studies overlap, and one that is particularly full of ecological resonance for our endangered world. I only occasionally address some of the ecological resonances of the plays themselves, focusing instead on the creation of the performance, on the making of a fictional world in which the play can live. I consider the creation of these performance worlds to be an act of poetics, that is *poiesis*. I apply the Phillips line of ecocriticism, examining my chosen performances as problem areas for performance and Shakespearean study, and I examine the connections between these worlds and our own world. I do not consider these performance worlds representational but analogies from which we can draw ecological lessons. Finally, I believe that one could consider theatre (and, to a lesser extent, artistic cinema) a problem area that is continually threatened by lack of funding and disappearing audiences. Perhaps by studying the "groundbreaking" performances that I have selected, we can learn more about how to, as Phillips says, "address and

redress” the threats that theatre faces, as well as the threats that our world faces as they are evident in such performances.

## Chapter 2: Critical Methodology

The lack of an accepted critical paradigm leaves ecocritics with two choices: either reject the necessity of methodology, or create a methodology specific to one's own critical project. If ecocriticism is to follow the lead of ecological science, then the latter choice must be preferred. Therefore, individual critics must choose a set of principles and guidelines cultivated from ecological science and critical studies. The most difficult aspect of this, beyond the scope of the necessary research, is to choose the most appropriate methodology. An ecologist studying a desert bioregion would not need to apply the science of hydrology to the individual study, whereas ecologists studying the Great Lakes would. Similarly, an ecocritic studying the metropolitan paintings of Jan Steen has very different needs than one studying the landscape photography of Ansel Adams. One of the reasons that ecocriticism lacks a standard methodology is because of the long-standing focus on nature writing, the most common subject matter for ecocritics. I would suggest that nature writing – defined as those works of literature that specifically focus on environmental themes or natural phenomena like the work of Thoreau, the Romantics, Terry Tempest Williams, etc. – is a subject that should be avoided by ecocritics. As Dana Phillips suggested, representational art – such as realistic depictions of the environment by nature writers – is not necessarily important. There is no real need for a critical approach to these works. Rather, ecocritics should focus their attention on re-reading canonical texts through the lens of ecological specificity. This chapter details a methodology for the ecocritical study of Shakespeare in performance by elucidating the concepts of adaptation, ecopoetics and place, the dispersion of energy, and the interconnectedness of all things. I discuss these concepts in relation to both theatre and film, and discuss the differences in methodological approach to each in the context of prior ecocritical work on the two art forms. Finally, I set out the primary

“texts” that I study and explain, in relation to this methodology, the justification for a focus upon these specific works of art.

### *Adaptation*

Adaptation is an important concept in science as well as in the study of literature, theatre, and film. Adaptation, from the Latin *adaptare* (literally to fit or make suitable), is a word of process, suggestive of action. While there are differences in the ways the process of adaptation is conceptualised in science and the arts, the two are linked, however, and it is my intention to show direct correlations between scientific adaptation and artistic adaptation. It is central to my argument that any theatrical or cinematic production of a Shakespearean work is an act of adaptation. The work of adapting is usually accomplished by writers and directors in the case of Shakespearean adaptation, but it is the work itself that actually changes, that adapts in order to fit a new situation or environment. It is this interaction between the work and the environment, mediated as it is by the hands of artists, that is the crux of the adaptive process in relation to Shakespeare’s plays.

Biological adaptation is predominantly the work of genes. According to Darwin’s original theory of evolution, genes resulting in positive phenotypes give individuals a better chance for survival and procreation, hence those genes are passed on and perpetuated. According to Timothy Shanahan’s revision of Darwin’s theory, there are two schools of thought on how adaptations occur in nature. The first, or “causal thesis,” claims that “genes cause phenotypes, which then interact with the environment, resulting in the differential perpetuation of genes.”<sup>72</sup> The other school of thought, the “representation thesis,” posits, “Even if selection

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<sup>72</sup> Timothy Shanahan, *The Evolution of Darwinism: Selection, Adaptation, and Progress in Evolutionary Biology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) 72.

acts directly on phenotypes, it is still true that only genes get passed on to subsequent generations, and in doing so serve as repositories of information.”<sup>73</sup> The common denominator for both theories is that the genes of an individual interact with its environment and the result of this interaction is adaptation. The applications of these ideas from ecological science to dramatic ecocriticism seem obvious. Environments for Shakespeare’s plays – ranging from society at large to individual theatre structures – have changed wildly in the past four hundred-plus years. In order to survive, Shakespeare’s play have adapted to new environments through the careful hands of theatrical and cinematic adapters. Thus, ecocritics studying these works must take into account the environments in which reproductions occur in order to understand how the adaptive process works. Consider the following analogy: the phenotypes (observable traits) that demonstrate genetic combinations in nature are like the observable signifiers in a theatrical or cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare. These signifiers, if successful, will perpetuate the play, making it more likely to survive in the long run. The genes, which control the phenotypes and are the perpetuators of adaptation, are like the artists who control the signifiers of the specific adaptation. In order to understand the purpose of a specific adaptation, we must not only understand its phenotypes, but the reasons (the environment) that the artists made these specific alterations to the original.

The connection between biological and performative adaptation can be taken even further when we consider the specificity with which ecology has begun approaching its subjects. This brings me back to the notion of “patchiness” that I introduced via the work of Dana Phillips at the end of the last chapter. Phillips claims that terms such as patchiness, grain, pattern, and variation are synonymous, and frustrate “our attempts to identify and understand natural systems

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<sup>73</sup> Shanahan 72.

as, well, natural *systems*.”<sup>74</sup> In fact, these terms are not synonymous, they indicate very different, albeit interrelated, aspects of ecological study. While all of these terms are important to studying natural ecosystems, patchiness remains the most interesting for ecocritical work, and risks being oversimplified by Phillips’s utilisation of the term as a mere commentary on ecological specificity. According to ecologist Bruce Winterhalder, “The concept of patchiness derives from the observation that the environmental factors affecting the immediate behaviors and long-term evolutionary fitness of organisms are distributed discontinuously in space and time.”<sup>75</sup> What this means is that we must historicise adaptations, contextualise them in order to understand that they “result from historical processes in natural ecosystems which have as their most important characteristics temporal variance and spatial heterogeneity.”<sup>76</sup> So adaptation is not a slow process of evolution, but happens in fits and starts, across a wide range of geographical locations. For ecocritics, this means that we cannot read a work without contextualising it. No artistic system is a system unto itself, just as no ecosystem exists without environmental pressures. Every system, whether artistic or natural, interacts with a broader environment in both space and time, and must be understood as such.

Notions of adaptation for stage and screen are largely derived from theories of literary adaptation. Theories of adaptation as it relates to literature in performance can be roughly divided into two categories: those who attempt to codify adaptations and those who believe, following poststructuralist lines, that all performance is inherently adaptive. The former school of thought is largely derived from the early- to mid-twentieth century desire of criticism to categorize and codify all literature into tidy little systems. One example of theorists applying

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<sup>74</sup> Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* 79, original emphasis, quote above, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Winterhalder, “Environmental Analysis in Human Evolution and Adaptive Research,” *Human Ecology* 8.2 (June 1980): 151.

<sup>76</sup> Winterhalder 136.



notions of literary adaptation to performance was Geoffrey Wagner who identified three types of cinematic adaptation.<sup>77</sup> In *The Novel and the Cinema*, Wagner delineates transposition – a direct translation of the novel to the screen; commentary – which alters the original “either purposely or inadvertently”; and analogy – which fundamentally alters the context of a work for film.<sup>78</sup> More recent theorists have continued this line of thinking, sophisticating it somewhat by distinguishing the term adaptation from the term interpretation. Margaret Jane Kidnie, in her recent work *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*, argues that “interpretation is inherent to the text. The text is thought to contain a possible – albeit potentially limitless – range of meanings which can then be enacted, even discovered, in performance.”<sup>79</sup> Kidnie goes on to argue, in essence, that the notion of “a work” in performance is fluid, it “continually takes shape as a *consequence* of production” and therefore the notion of adaptation alters depending on the currently accepted “boundaries of the work.”<sup>80</sup>

Kidnie, in some ways, is responding to the work of more poststructuralist theorists who argue that any act of interpretation is necessarily an act of adaptation, or at least an initial step in the process of adaptation. She argues, in relation to Daniel Fischlin’s and Mark Fortier’s work on Shakespearean adaptations, that they “are in danger of emptying the term [adaptation] of meaning, making it synonymous with production.”<sup>81</sup> However, Fischlin and Fortier have a much more nuanced view of adaptation than Kidnie credits them with:

Every drama text is an incomplete entity that must be “translated” by being put on stage. Adaptation is, therefore, only an extreme version of the reworking that takes place in any theatrical production. Theatre does things to the drama text that cannot be justified as

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<sup>77</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1975).

<sup>78</sup> Wagner 222-224, quote from 223.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009): 20.

<sup>80</sup> Kidnie 7, 31, original emphasis.

<sup>81</sup> Kidnie 5.

acts of fidelity, and yet are necessary for any production to take place... Theatre is always a form of reworking, in a sense the first step toward adaptation.<sup>82</sup>

Fischlin and Fortier follow a long line of critics and theorists who follow poststructuralist lines of thought that begin, in a way, with Bakhtin's dialogic model in which the process of reading and interpretation is central to the mode of textual reception. One of the difficulties of fully grasping the adaptive process of theatrical or cinematic production is that there are always two groups of readers: the directors, designers, and actors who interpret the play for the production, and the audience members who interpret the production (often in relation to the playtext, though in some cases without a prior point of textual reference).

This latter school of thought in relation to adaptation, that it is literally everywhere in performance arts, is more in line with an ecological understanding of adaptation. Every act, every interpretation, can be understood as indicating a difference between an "original" and a new work. The problem with Kidnie's formulation is that there is no telling where the "boundaries" of a work may be located, and when/where they will move. In contextualising performance, in understanding that adaptation is an historical as well as an environmental process, we can begin to understand production in an ecological manner. In other words, the performing arts can remain "open systems" – or systems that are not locked into the downward spiral of entropy that is inherent in all closed systems according to the second law of thermodynamics. Julie Sanders, whose work theorizes adaptation within the context of postcolonial thought, states, "The dramatic form encourages persistent reworking and imagining. Performance is an inherently adaptive art; each staging is a collaborative interpretation, one

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<sup>82</sup> Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, "General Introduction," *Adaptations of Shakespeare: a critical anthology of plays from the seventeenth century to the present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 7.

which often reworks a playscript to acknowledge contemporary concerns or issues.”<sup>83</sup> It is important, as Sanders notes, to understand precisely the context within which the “collaborative interpretation” takes place, what the “contemporary concerns or issues” are that influence the adapters and the readers (theatre artists, audience). Obviously there are adaptations that are more and less radical. There are adaptations that attempt to remain “true to the original” (e.g. Branagh’s *Henry V*), and those that have specific purposes in radically altering the original (e.g. a feminist reading of *Othello* like Paula Vogel’s *Desdemona: a play about a handkerchief*), and countless examples of “in between” productions (e.g. Peter Brook’s work on *King Lear* or Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet*). The whole point, though, is to bring something new to the text, to enter into Bakhtin’s dialogue with the hope of extending the life of a work by finding new ways to make it fit in the world.

### *The Rise of the Reader’s Theatre*

Ever since Barthes declared the death of the author<sup>84</sup> the source of a work’s meaning has been in dispute. The notion that the author’s intent for a work is its meaning has fallen away and in its place there has been a new “author” declared: the reader (or interpreter). Mediation has become the accepted mode of critical understanding, that a work has no independent meaning, but that it is in the minds of the consumers of said work, of the audience in theatre and cinema, to determine the meaning from the signs and symbols inherent in the work. Barthes, while rarely acknowledged as doing so, even provided a path for an understanding of the performance work within a framework without an author. He said, “In ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose

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<sup>83</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, New Critical Idiom series (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 48.

<sup>84</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 142.

‘performance’ – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his ‘genius’.”<sup>85</sup> So criticism, also an adaptive process, must now accept the multiplicity of meanings, the multiplicity of interpretations, the sheer multitude of viewpoints from which a work can be understood. Never, however, according to Barthes, does the responsibility for this multiplicity fall upon one person, it is always mediated, often by numerous interpreters. As I mentioned earlier, the problem with theatre and film, in fact with all art that is produced by numerous artists (especially throughout time) and consumed by numerous audiences, is that there are two processes of mediation between the “text” of the performance and its ultimate reception.

In the performing arts, Antonin Artaud preceded the death of the author with his rise of the director. As Gerald Rabkin states,

Artaud’s emancipation proclamation of the director from the presumed tyranny of the playwright – “No one has the right to call himself author, that is to say creator, except the person who controls the direct handling of the stage” – became one of the guiding principles of the advanced theatre of the sixties and early seventies.<sup>86</sup>

Rabkin’s article gives an overview of the rise of interpretive theatre of the 1960s and 1970s while focusing on a discussion of two ongoing lawsuits in 1985 between playwrights and theatre companies. While these two lawsuits are irrelevant for my study, Rabkin’s theoretical overview of the death of the author and the rise of the reader in theatrical arts is essential. Following Eco and Saussure, he notes the necessity of the “open” text, or a text which requires interpretation for understanding. I read this further as a text that requires adaptation for survival. Rabkin states, “The rise of ‘director’s theatre’ mirrors literary criticism’s movement from the emphasis upon the immanent ‘meaning’ of literary texts to the acceptance of the processes of reading and

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<sup>85</sup> Barthes 142.

<sup>86</sup> Gerald Rabkin, “Is There a Text on this Stage?: Theatre/Authorship/Interpretation,” *Performing Arts Journal* 9.2-3 (1985) 143. Quote from Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double* (1938).

interpretation which determine meaning.”<sup>87</sup> Artaud’s director, the creator of the work on stage, perhaps does not go far enough to creating an open text, because it still has an originator, what we may call the “right” interpreter. Instead, the practitioners of what I call “open theatre” in the 1960s remain in dialogue with an audience that is required to engage with the text on stage (or screen) in order to give the work meaning. For my purposes, two key theatrical practitioners and theorists fill in the detail of work in relation to adaptation and understanding within this context of the open text: Peter Brook and Richard Schechner.

Brook’s work provides the basis for my reading of *King Lear* in performance in part two of this thesis, but his theoretical work provides a broader understanding of theatre ecology. Between his work on the two adaptations of *King Lear*, Brook wrote what remains one of the more influential books of performance theory, *The Empty Space*. Central in Brook’s mind when writing the book was the question of theatre’s ability to survive. *The Empty Space* is largely a reaction to his feeling that theatre was a dying artform that had become disconnected from its audience. He comes to his efforts at revivifying performance through better use of theatrical space. Richard Schechner’s work *The Environmental Theater* is, similarly, the culmination of years of experiments in theatrical space and audience interaction in New York. Both directors-turned-writers were the vanguard of the “director’s theatre” movement of the 1960s that responded to the problems posed by poststructuralist thought with a multiplicity of theatrical readings, and their arguments regarding theatrical space have clear ties to theatrical ecocriticism.

Brook’s frustration with the theatre at the time of his writing *The Empty Space* led him to classify theatre in four broad categories: deadly, holy, rough, and immediate. The first is his term for the brand of theatre most commonly practiced, the bland and unimportant productions

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<sup>87</sup> Rabkin 155.

that were so prevalent in the U.K. at the time. One particular quote bears repeating at length in relation to deadly theatre, as it is an admonition to performance scholars and critics everywhere:

To make matters worse, there is always a deadly spectator, who for special reasons enjoys a lack of intensity and even a lack of entertainment, such as the scholar who emerges from routine performances of the classics smiling because nothing has distracted him from trying over and confirming his pet theories to himself, whilst reciting his favourite lines under his breath. In his heart he sincerely wants a theatre that is nobler-than-life, and he confuses a sort of intellectual satisfaction with the true experience for which he craves.<sup>88</sup>

Brook warns that the deadly theatre, and the deadly spectators that he describes, push theatre further away from the experience that it should be, turning it into merely an intellectual exercise. His warning to scholars is particularly important, as we are apt to dissect the minutiae while ignoring the whole of a performance. It is most interesting, however, to consider Brook's notion of a deadly spectator within the context of theatre as an ecosystem. If the only spectators were these "deadly scholars," then the inherent entropy of the system would lead to a systemic crash. Theatre must attract new audiences, must stage new plays, must read old plays in new ways, but it must also be able to shake up the deadly spectator, if it wishes to adapt and survive.

Brook's book is as much an attempt to clarify his thoughts on theatrical production as it is an intellectual commentary on the state of theatre. He says, "This is a picture of the author at the moment of writing – searching with a decaying and evolving theatre. As I continue to work, each experience will make these conclusions inconclusive again."<sup>89</sup> It is this sense of renewal, of finding new conclusions with each new experience, of breathing new life into the "evolving theatre" that is most crucial to an ecocritical understanding of Brook's theoretical work. He is intensely concerned with the ephemeral nature of the performance event. He says, "Theatre is always a self-destructive art, and it is always written on the wind...from the day [a performance]

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968) 12-13.

<sup>89</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 112.

is set something invisible is beginning to die.”<sup>90</sup> Basarab Nicolescu, in his study of energy in Brook’s work, addresses this “problem” with performance, saying that as energy circulates in the theatre, the audience member is “in a sudden confrontation with him/herself. The marks etched into our memories in this way last a long time: although theatre is ‘a self-destructive art,’ it is nonetheless capable of attaining a certain permanence.”<sup>91</sup> This permanence, the lasting impressions of a theatrical performance, accounts for why so many of Brook’s productions, like *King Lear*, remain such fertile ground for continued study and critique.

Schechner’s book *Environmental Theater* is concerned with expressing his ideas derived from the work of The Performance Group (TPG) in New York, now known as the Wooster Group, coincidentally one of the theatres involved in the lawsuits detailed by Gerald Rabkin. Much of Schechner’s work, therefore, is made up of case studies of individual performances, including those that were roughly contemporaneous with Brook’s work. The TPG productions that Schechner focuses on include *Dionysus in '69* (performed in 1968), an adaptation of Euripides’ play *The Bacchae*, and *Makbeth* (1969), an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play. Schechner was also the editor of *Tulane Drama Review* from 1962 to 1968, and it was in this journal that he first presented his environmental theatre ideology in an article titled “The Six Axioms of Environmental Theater” (reprinted in his book). While Brook does reference his theatrical work in *The Empty Space*, it is largely a work of theatrical theory (born out of experience), while Schechner’s is more grounded in the actual experiences of the stage work and recounting exercises for theatre practitioners to attain similar results. Nevertheless, the two were working to develop the same kind of intense, experiential performance technique, and both worked largely through a study of theatrical space. In fact, Schechner refers to several of

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<sup>90</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 18.

<sup>91</sup> Basarab Nicolescu, “Peter Brook and Traditional Thought,” trans. David Williams, *Gurdieff International Review* 4.2 (Spring 2001) 5.

Brook's productions as expressions of environmental theatre (*King Lear* and the "Theatre of Cruelty" season particularly), and even used a suggestion of Brook's while working on TPG's *Makbeth*.<sup>92</sup> Schechner argues, "A mise-en-scène is *everything that comprises what the audience experiences*. To create a mise is to create something whole."<sup>93</sup> Brook argues along the same lines, urging a consideration not only of the actors and their work on the stage, but also of the audience and the society that envelops the production in order to understand "the true unity of all these elements."<sup>94</sup> This is not a return to a conception of "the organic whole" or the unity of a work of art in the manner of the New Criticism. Theatre may be ephemeral in that every individual performance is unrepeatable, but it is also very physical in that the stage, the set, and the actors all have presence. One must take into account the whole of a production in order to understand it, and that means more than just understanding the words of the text and how they are used. Fischlin and Fortier, in their study of adaptations, echo this saying, "Theatrical adaptation is an intertextual apparatus, a system of relations and citations not only between verbal texts, but between singing and speaking bodies, lights, sounds, movements, and all other cultural elements at work in theatrical production."<sup>95</sup> The whole of the performance experience carries meaning with it, and theatrical interpreters must be open to all the possible ways that the production communicates meaning to the multiple readers in an audience.

One of Brook's key phrases is "the language of behaviour."<sup>96</sup> He is specifically referring to the interaction between text and actor, between actor and stage environment, and between actor and audience. Nicolescu, bringing in methods of scientific analysis, argues,

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, new edition (New York and London: Applause, 1994) 25.

<sup>93</sup> Schechner, *Environmental* 290 (original emphasis).

<sup>94</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 44.

<sup>95</sup> Fischlin and Fortier 7.

<sup>96</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 18.



The grouping text-actor-audience reflects the characteristics of a natural system: when a true theatrical “event” takes place, it is greater than the sum of its parts. The interactions between text and actors, text and audience and actors and audience constitute the new, irreducible element. At the same time, text, actors and audience are true sub-systems, opening themselves up to each other.<sup>97</sup>

Just as in ecological study, the key to understanding the theatrical “event” is in studying the interactions between its constituent parts. The different “sub-systems” that are present in any theatrical performance (whether it achieves the rarified status of “true event” or not) interact with one another. Brook’s “language of behaviour” is more than just the non-verbal actions of an actor, but includes the interactions of the audience with the stage world, the actor with the stage world and the audience, the text, and all the other elements that make up a theatrical performance. I will further define the concept of the “stage world” in the next section of this methodology, but it is similar to what Schechner terms the *mise-en-scène*, and it is crucial to understanding the concept of theatre ecology that I am elucidating in this thesis.

Brook’s move toward ritualisation and his interest in indigenous cultures developed even further later in his career. After the film of *King Lear* (1971), he spent time touring with companies to Africa, Australia, and the rural United States. Productions like *Conference of the Birds* and *Orghast at Persepolis* sought for a reconnection with grounded communicative meaning, and while he was criticised for appropriating rituals and customs of indigenous peoples, the work itself was a revelation in theatrical terms. At the point of writing *The Empty Space*, this interest in custom and ritual was still developing, still in the process of becoming a possibility in Brook’s mind. He states his desire for a return to the “holy” theatre, or at least a return of the communal aspects of sacred performance thus:

All the forms of sacred art have certainly been destroyed by bourgeois values but this sort of observation does not help our problem. It is foolish to allow a revulsion from bourgeois forms to turn into a revulsion from needs that are common to all men: if the

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<sup>97</sup> Nicolescu 3.

need for a true contact with a sacred invisibility through the theatre still exists, then all possible vehicles must be re-examined.<sup>98</sup>

The goal of connecting the audience with the production was shared by Schechner, who believed, according to Margaret Croydon, that “events, environmentals and primitive rituals are intimately related, a belief that caused a good deal of controversy. He believes that an exciting new kind of theatre is to be achieved by combining a ritual with a real event, which he calls an ‘actual.’”<sup>99</sup> What both of these theatre practitioners are striving toward is the open theatre, a theatre that means many things to many people, but that connects the people in the audience with the performance itself.

Just as the boundary between art and nature is not a strict boundary but the two overlap and interact, so the individual-communal response to a theatrical performance (or any work of art, or any event whatsoever) is not a strict duality. An individual’s response, as an audience member, can influence the reactions of other spectators, and the influence of the whole audience can affect the individual. Hence the maxim, “Laughter is infectious.” In the introduction to his revised edition, Schechner claims that “to stage a performance ‘environmentally’ means more than simply to move it off of the proscenium or out of the arena. An environmental performance is one in which *all elements or parts* making up the performance are recognized as alive.”<sup>100</sup> The reactions of the audience are one part constituting the performance, and the spatial experiments that Schechner’s group undertook were designed to create an environment in which the actors and audience could better interact. Brook similarly sought for a revitalisation of the interaction between stage and audience, though he frequently worked not with a sense of unification or harmonious interaction, but with elements that would jolt or shock the audience into interaction

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<sup>98</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 54.

<sup>99</sup> Margaret Croydon, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets: The contemporary experimental theatre* (New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Books, 1974) 196.

<sup>100</sup> Schechner, *Environmental* x.

(Brook's "rough" theatre). He says in terms of audience, the society of the audience, and the world of the performance,

The true unity of all these elements may best be served by factors that by other standards seem ugly, discordant and destructive. A stable and harmonious society might need only to look for ways of reflecting and reaffirming its harmony in its theatres. Such theatres could set out to unite cast and audience in a mutual "yes". But a shifting, chaotic world often must choose between a playhouse that offers a spurious "yes" or a provocation so strong that it splinters its audiences into fragments of vivid "nos".<sup>101</sup>

In the next chapter, I further discuss the theatrical exploration of this "shifting, chaotic world" in relation to Brook's stage adaptation of *King Lear*, but it is clear that the point of Brook's theorising at this moment is to direct the meaning of a production onto the audience. In other words, he is saying that the director mediates the relationship between the play and audience, in order to further serve an audience that may not live in a world of perfect harmony.

Brook's formulation also brings in a sense of mediated realism, of the staged action reflecting the real world. His notion of "a shifting, chaotic world" certainly was applicable to the world in which he lived when writing *The Empty Space* (the social upheaval of the 1960s coming to its climax). Modern ecology has been influenced more by chaos theory than by any sense of organic wholeness, suggesting that while we can apply systems theory to natural mechanisms in order to make generalised arguments, there will always be exceptions. The natural world does not act harmoniously, and if theatre is a reflection of that world, neither should a staged world. Nowhere is this clearer than in Brook's and Schechner's discussions of "happenings." Happenings were *avant garde* theatrical phenomena of the 1960s during which a theatrical event could occur nearly anywhere, often in the interest of protesting some social occurrence (war, taxes, racism, etc.). Happenings are chaotic events, the audience is not an audience as such, but whoever happens to be standing nearby when the enactors of a happening come together.

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<sup>101</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 44.

Frequently, the goal of a happening was to encourage the “spectators” to take part in the action, to become actively engaged with the staged event. Brook considers happenings as an example of “immediate” theatre. However, in terms of all the theatrical forms that Brook considers part of the “solution” to deadly theatre, happenings combined elements of “immediate” and “rough” theatre. Schechner, similarly, utilised happenings in his theatrical work, which led to his belief, as expressed by Croydon:

The division of space between the audience and the performers was artificial. Once rules of space are broken down, he maintained, the audience will be participants as well as observers, and each event would then determine its own space – a basic principle of environmental theatre. Further, Schechner claimed that environmental and ritual theatre would be a means of bringing people close together, in contrast to the proscenium theatre, in which people are isolated by the enforced seating arrangement.<sup>102</sup>

Since the 1960s, happenings have fallen out of fashion, though their influence can still be seen in the work of modern performance artists, and in the movement away from “traditional” theatrical spaces toward “found-space” performances and non-proscenium theatre.

In a happening, the performance can occur anywhere from a street corner, to a car on the subway, to an individual’s living room. In a way, the happening is the most experiential of theatrical art forms, as it requires an immediate engagement by the performers with the world of the spectators (or experiencers) rather than the spectators engaging with the theatrical world. This impacted Brook’s notion of theatrical space, as well as Schechner’s, who summarises saying, “The environmental theater learned to reject the orthodox use of space and to seek in the events to be performed organic and dynamic definitions of space. Naturally, such ideas are incompatible with mainstream scenic practice.”<sup>103</sup> The goal of all this is to create a more vibrant stage-world, not necessarily a more “realistic” performance world. It is partially through an understanding of place, as discussed in chapter one, and its complexity as an idea that these

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<sup>102</sup> Croydon, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets* 194.

<sup>103</sup> Schechner, *Environmental* xxxi.

efforts at revolutionising stage space can be seen as ecological efforts. As Schechner comments in another book, “What these experiments [with theatrical space] ‘create’ is a liminal existence between nature and culture. The experiments suggest what the performing arts have long asserted, that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ may be a false dichotomy, that actually these are not opposing realms.”<sup>104</sup> Also, however, it is necessary to understand, even if by analogy, that the theatrical space mirrors real space (in fact, it *is* real space).

Schechner, in his revised introduction, makes precisely this point saying, “The theatrical and ecological meanings of environment are not antithetical. An environment is what surrounds, sustains, envelops, contains, nests. But it is also participatory and active, a concatenation of living systems.”<sup>105</sup> Brook argues along similar lines:

Anyone interested in processes in the natural world would be greatly rewarded by a study of theatre conditions. His discoveries would be far more applicable to general society than the study of bees or ants. Under the magnifying glass he would see a group of people living all the time according to precise, shared, but unnamed standards. He would see that in any community a theatre has either no particular function – or a unique one.<sup>106</sup>

In other words, theatre acts like an ecosystem, because it is an ecosystem. It is more than a mere analogy. The art of theatre does not merely mimic life, the stage-world is not just a mirror for nature, but it is made of the same stuff, it functions in the same way, it relies on the real world for its inspiration and existence. In a more recent interview, Brook clarifies his point saying,

Theatre exists in the here and now. It is what happens at that precise moment when you perform, that moment at which the world of the actors and the audience meet. A society in miniature, a microcosm brought together every evening within a space. Theatre’s role is to give this microcosm a burning and fleeting taste of another world, and thereby interest it, transform it, integrate it.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 115.

<sup>105</sup> Schechner, *Environmental* ix.

<sup>106</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 111.

<sup>107</sup> Gérard Montassier, ed., *Le Fait Culturel* (Paris: Fayard, 1980) 121; quoted in Nicolescu 2.

So the place of theatre is not merely the making of place within theatrical space, but all the elements that must come together for a theatrical event: actor, audience, text, music, scenery, lights (or any combination of those, with actor, audience, and text being the primary functioning sub-systems). This highlights the notion of theatrical performance as process: these things do not just magically come together but are carefully chosen by the practitioners (mostly directors), in order to get across something, or some set of things, to the attentive audience member.

The end goal of all this theorizing, and the goal of both Brook's and Schechner's work, is the continual awakening of the audience's imagination. The activation of imagination is not simply a matter of stimulating the minds, not only jarring their sensibilities and expectations. Imagination is an engaging process: one has to work to imagine something, and it is the whole of theatrical creation that inspires such imaginative processes. For Brook, in *The Empty Space*, it is the process of theatrical interaction that can inspire the audience's imaginations, that can produce worlds in front of their eyes that have not only a look, but sound, depth, and other distinguishable qualities as well. In a later argument, Brook summarises his theatrical efforts saying, "I have also looked for movement and energy. Bodily energy as much as that of emotions, in such a way that the energy released onstage can unleash within the spectator a feeling of vitality that he would not find in everyday life."<sup>108</sup> The energy Brook speaks of is new, part of the adaptive process, and it is renewable provided the adaptation is strong.

The environmental movement is concerned with the relationship between the global and the local. Near the end of *The Empty Space*, Brook questions how the theatre will move beyond the decay and deadliness he perceives in it: "As I write, I do not know whether it is only on a tiny scale, in tiny communities, that drama can be renewed. Or whether it is possible on a large scale,

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<sup>108</sup> Montassier 111, quoted in Nicolescu 3.

in a big playhouse in a capital city.”<sup>109</sup> This thought is apt for the time in which Brook was writing, as Friends of the Earth adopted their slogan “Think globally, act locally” only one year later. This has since become the mantra of the environmental movement. Schechner, expressing a similar sentiment but putting a more positive spin on the state of theatre, argues, “The feel I get from a successful environment is that of a *global space*, a microcosm, with flow, contact, and interaction.”<sup>110</sup> In other words, the performance may feel like a global space, but it must be localised, it must be a microcosm, in order for the interactions Schechner describes to be discernible. It must be in smaller communities that theatre is most responsible to its audience, can best understand how to create worlds through an accessible imaginative process. Theatre is a “living” art, to borrow Brook’s phrase, and must be responded to on the same terms as the living environment. We can even use Brook’s theatrical categories in environmental terms: deadly, holy, immediate, rough. The best theatre is a combination of the latter three to counteract the first, and the best environmental action is the same. So it is that theatre practitioners like Brook and Schechner sought so stringently to find a means of engaging the audience on a sensory level, and hence inspire their imaginative responses. By constructing theatrical worlds that contribute to this sensory engagement, they used the tools of what I call *ecopoetics*.

### *Ecopoetics*

Let us return for a moment to the concept of adaptation. The point of adapting any work for the stage or screen is to create something new. Even the most “faithful” rendering of a play on stage or screen will necessarily vary not only from the writer’s original ideas, but will even vary somewhat from performance to performance (Brook’s notion of the ephemeral theatre).

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<sup>109</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 150.

<sup>110</sup> Schechner, *Environmental* 30.

Linda Hutcheon, in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, argues that adapting a work is “a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and the (re-)creation.”<sup>111</sup> Both in terms of biological adaptation and theatrical or cinematic adaptation, something new is always created, and it is from this new entity that we learn about the adaptation itself, it is the new performance work that we study in relation to the source work. So it is the process of creating the new work that I take as my primary study here, borrowing the term “ecopoetics” from Jonathan Bate. In his words, ecopoetics “is not a description of dwelling with the earth, not a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it.”<sup>112</sup> In part, Bate’s development of this term is a rejection of ecocriticism’s political aims in favor of its ability to view literature, specifically poetry, as “a making of the dwelling-place.”<sup>113</sup>

What Bate is referring to here in terms of “making” is the origin of the word “poetry” – the Greek *poiesis* – which literally means “making.” He is partially following A.D. Nuttall’s landmark work *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* views Shakespeare’s creation of fictional worlds for his plays in relation to Platonic and Aristotelian views of art. Nuttall argues that neither philosopher believed art had anything to do with nature, but that it could potentially imitate nature in some way. He says, “The poet is a maker. Today it is only the learned who are aware that the idea of making is implicit in the word ‘poet’. But for the ancient Greeks the word for ‘poet’ is simply one and the same as the word for ‘maker’.”<sup>114</sup> Bate argues that ecopoetics means the poem literally constructs its own environment following a “deep ecology” line of thinking. Nuttall is more concerned with the purposes of criticism, and he outlines two primary “languages” that critics use:

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<sup>111</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) 8 (original emphasis).

<sup>112</sup> Bate, *Song* 42.

<sup>113</sup> Bate, *Song* 75.

<sup>114</sup> A.D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality*, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007, originally published 1983) 86.



The first “opaque”, external, formalist, operating outside the mechanisms of art and taking those mechanisms as its object, the second “transparent”, internal, realist, operating within the “world” presented in the work. The first language throws upon the screen of critical consciousness all the formal devices of a work in such a way that the eye is arrested by them... In the second language, formal devices are, like windows, transparent.<sup>115</sup>

Nuttall is not overtly concerned with ecological matters, but rather with connecting the form of a work of art with what it represents. He argues, in the end, “Of the two languages of criticism it is the internal, Transparent one which most obviously lets in the outer world. *Enter* the work and you walk *out*, free, into the surrounding landscape.”<sup>116</sup>

What Nuttall and Bate both argue is that producers (poets, directors, designers, actors) of these works of art create a new world in which they can live, one that can be experienced by the consumers (audience) of that work. The world is not necessarily realistic, it can have entirely its own laws and rules, and function in a way utterly foreign to our “real world,” but it exists, however fleetingly, for the duration of the work of art. The new world is the work’s environment, in which it lives, and it interacts in a dialectical fashion with the real world. There are recognisable elements in even the strangest fictional world, there is a reality, a physicality to the world. Mary Poovey, in her article eschewing the need for critical objectivity, describes theatre as achieving a negotiation “between an illusory ‘world’ nevertheless momentarily realized and an audience half believing what they always know will disappear.”<sup>117</sup> Schechner further states that this fictional world is experienced by both performers and spectators, “They believe and disbelieve at the same time. This is theater’s chief delight. The show is real and not real at the same time.”<sup>118</sup> The key in terms of understanding the fictional worlds is the ability to

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<sup>115</sup> Nuttall 80.

<sup>116</sup> Nuttall 94.

<sup>117</sup> Mary Poovey, “Creative Criticism: Adaptation, Performative Writing, and the Problem of Objectivity,” *Narrative* 8.2 (May 2000) 126.

<sup>118</sup> Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* 113.

experience them, not all fictional worlds are effective environments for their own stories. In order to show how these fictional worlds function, we must look at them in two ways. First, we must understand that they are adaptations on several levels. They adapt aspects of the real world for a fictional environment, and they adapt aspects of the play for artistic purposes. In other words, these worlds do not exist in a vacuum, and they are not created in a vacuum, therefore we must understand the intertextual relationships between the fictional worlds that are created by the artists and the elements that go into making that world. Second, we must understand that these worlds are meant to be experienced by an audience, and can be experienced in a way similar to experiencing the real world. In order to achieve this understanding, I adopt a modified phenomenological study of performance.

I say “modified” because it is obviously impossible for me, as a critic, to actually witness the theatrical and cinematic events that I study first-hand in their original context. Rather, I rely on first-hand accounts of the performances, primarily reviewers, as well as accounts of the creation of these performances. Bert O. States argues, “The phenomenological critic strives to show how theater becomes theater – that is, how theater throws up the pretense that it is another kind of reality than the one constituting the ground on which its pretense is based.”<sup>119</sup>

Phenomenology is an inclusive strategy for criticism, understanding that the world created by theatrical performance is pretense, but pretense that is necessarily related to reality. My modified phenomenology accepts a wide variety of potentially signifying elements, and is thus not exclusive from semiology, but it also includes the reported experience of receiving these signs and the reported construction of these signs by the theatre artists. Phenomenology is essential to an ecopoetic approach because an individual is an engaged experiencer of nature, just

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<sup>119</sup> Bert O. States, “The Phenomenological Attitude,” *Critical Theory and Performance*, eds. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 372.

as an audience member is an engaged perceiver of a work of art, and all of these responses are influenced by a communal approach, either the influence of culture on individual reactions or the immediacy of the community as it is constructed in a theatrical audience.

Just as Kershaw argues that a more immersive audience experience is necessary for the development of a more ecological form of theatre, so David Abram argues for a more participatory relationship with nature. In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram asserts that a phenomenological approach to the natural world, an approach that he experienced while spending time with small indigenous populations in the developing world, can help heal the divide between Western culture and nature. He believes that the small tribes he spent time with were connected to their environment at the level of their senses, and that Western cultures have lost this connection, but it can be regained through phenomenology:

By asserting that perception, phenomenologically considered, is inherently participatory, we mean that perception always involves, at its most intimate level, the experience of an active interplay, or coupling between the perceiving body and that which it perceives. Prior to all our verbal reflections, at the level of our spontaneous sensorial engagement with the world around us, we are *all* animists.<sup>120</sup>

While he believes nature and culture are divided, I argue that this is yet another way in which culture and nature are necessarily intertwined. As experiencing bodies, there is what Abram calls “coupling” between the event or phenomenon that is perceived and the body that perceives it, and this is his idea for a phenomenology of ecology. For performance works, it is important to note that most of the “readers” who are constructing adaptations for stage and screen strive for a sensually connected audience, thus my modified phenomenological study of performance.

It must be noted that Dana Phillips takes particular umbrage with Abram’s work in *The Truth of Ecology*. He argues that Abram’s theory is predicated upon an imaginary breach in the

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<sup>120</sup> David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) 57.

relationship between humanity and culture, and that in Abram's project "we spend our time trying to bridge a rift that does not exist."<sup>121</sup> As I argued in the last chapter, the culture-nature relationship cannot be defined simply as a rift. The relationship between human culture and the natural environment is complex and the two are necessarily intertwined. Abram's initial assumptions may be flawed, as Phillips argues, but his expression of a phenomenological ecology provides a basis for a modified phenomenological theatrical criticism. Abram's goal is to recreate the connection between the human senses and the environment, a goal shared by theatrical practitioners who seek to envelop the audience in the world of performance and elicit a participatory reaction. Phillips concludes that phenomenology "seems to be an essentially aesthetic way of viewing the world."<sup>122</sup> In fact, it is, and while this may be a difficulty in relation to ecology, which does not take an aesthetic object for its study, it is certainly a necessary aspect of theatrical ecocriticism, as theatrical production is aesthetic. In a recent paper, Bruce Smith posited the notion that if an artist asks for a sensational, aesthetic, experiential response to a work of art, we as critics must accept this and stop objectifying such works.<sup>123</sup> The phenomenological approach, the experiential and aesthetic response to performance is necessary for an ecological analysis of theatre and film. It is necessary in order to understand the ecopoetics of a production – how the world of a performance functions, how it is an adapted world, and how the world was created by the artists involved.

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<sup>121</sup> Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* 167.

<sup>122</sup> Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* 214.

<sup>123</sup> Bruce R. Smith, "Art Appreciation for Early Modern Dummies," MLA Convention, Hyatt Regency, Chicago, 27 Dec. 2007.

### *Stage and Screen*

I take as my primary objects of study various adaptations of Shakespeare for both stage and screen. This is not an easy undertaking, as the methods of creating performance environments for both genres are very different. Nevertheless, the creators of the performance worlds function in much the same ways for both theatre and cinema, the works they are adapting are all Shakespearean, and the reception of both theatre and film is necessarily sensual, or it can be examined from the perspective of a modified phenomenology. I begin by looking at how ecocriticism has viewed theatre and cinema thus far through a limited literature survey, delineating when necessary the differences between the art forms. However, I will show that the study of adaptation through ecopoetics allows us to look at a variety of works of art with a similar methodological lens. I begin with theatrical ecocriticism, which can be divided into two primary categories: eco-drama, and the critique of Western theatre. The former encourages and lauds plays with ecological bases, the latter criticises the Western theatrical tradition for a perceived lack of environmental awareness. Eco-drama critics tend to focus on texts and adaptations of texts that have a specifically ecological thrust, not unlike early literary ecocriticism, which focused on nature writing. Only very occasionally does this strand break free of its self-imposed constraints to look at works not written with ecological ideologies in mind.

Most reports of eco-drama come from localised theatre journals. Lynn Jacobson's survey of eco-dramatic interpretations in the February 1992 issue of *American Theatre*<sup>124</sup> is a rare national piece. She surveys adaptations from Massachusetts to New Orleans in 1991 that focused on local environmental problems, such as the Contemporary Arts Center's adaptation of Heiner Müller's *Despoiled Shore/Medeamaterial/Landscape with Argonauts*. This adaptation

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<sup>124</sup> Lynn Jacobson, "Green Theatre," *American Theatre* 8.11 (Feb. 1992) 17-25, 55.

was overtly political, designed to raise awareness of local environmental problems, such as carcinogenic industrial waste that led to an area along the Mississippi River being nicknamed “Cancer Alley.”<sup>125</sup> While this article is a fairly comprehensive survey, and highlights the eco-political ramifications of such adaptation, it does not raise the question of the work’s artistic merit. Does it matter if a small theatre, with very little regional attention, let alone national or international, uses a playwright’s work to dramatise its own local environmental problems? Would it matter more if this work could be played on a larger scale, say touring the country, in order to raise a broader awareness of the area’s problems and perhaps ask other audiences to look at similar issues in their own area? Of course, if the work is not artistically successful, its political message risks getting lost because few audiences will ever experience it. This is a crux of ecopoetics: the work can be adapted for a new environment, but its environment needs to be artistically suited to the adapted material.

The Spring/Summer 1994 issue of the American journal *Theater* was dedicated to ecological drama. Articles ranged from reviews of local eco-drama to more theoretical examinations of the potential of such performances. Elinor Fuchs’s contribution is one such piece, arguing that contemporary eco-dramas are an extension of pastoral that is only possible in the age of ecology.<sup>126</sup> Her article highlights a problem with eco-drama critics, namely that their method is based only on a holistic ecosystem model. In relation to how works of eco-drama are received, she argues,

I do not make the claim, of course, that the ability to appropriately perceive such theater marks its spectators as ideologically committed ecologists. Rather I would say that the new pastoral draws on a perceptual faculty not unlike that developed by ecology, a systems-awareness that moves sharply away from the ethos of competitive individualism

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<sup>125</sup> Jacobson 20.

<sup>126</sup> Elinor Fuchs, “Play as Landscape: Another Version of Pastoral,” *Theater* 25.1 (Spring/Summer 1994) 44-51.

towards a vision of “the whole,” however defined in any given setting. In this sense we are becoming ecologists of theater.<sup>127</sup>

The major problem with Fuchs’s conception is that an “ecologist of theater” would understand that a departure “from the ethos of competitive individualism” may be a good analogy for how we humans should refigure our relationship with our environment, but it is not the way natural ecologies necessarily work. Play, as in Meeker’s formulation, may be important and cooperative, but competition is the dominant paradigm in nature. This does not mean we need to reject a cooperative conception of the human-nature relationship, but we do need to understand that this is not necessarily the model of behaviour as it is found in nature by ecological science.

Bonnie Marranca’s monograph *Ecologies of Theater*<sup>128</sup> is another effort to elucidate the powers of eco-drama. In her own words, Marranca claims the book is “the beginning of [her] search for a ‘theaterwriting’ more conscious of the magnitude of performance worlds where landscape, myth, and cultural memory create and bear witness to all histories of life.”<sup>129</sup> If any work of drama were able to incorporate such a vast array of “performance worlds” it would be incredible. Clearly, when we take into account the ecological concept of patchiness, such vast and all-encompassing requirements of successful art are less desirable. Marranca’s focus is on the dramatic writing of theatre, and not on the performance of a piece. This allows her to take the more specific view of looking at texts rather than the physical reality of the performance of such texts. One of the most repeated phrases in the book is “performance worlds,” and one must question what exactly is meant by this. Is it simply the setting of a play, the *mise-en-scène* of the performance that constitutes the world of that performance? Does the “performance world”

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<sup>127</sup> Fuchs 51.

<sup>128</sup> Bonnie Marranca, *Ecologies of Theater: Essays at the Century Turning* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

<sup>129</sup> Marranca, *Ecologies* xiv.

include the audience, without whom, of course, the performance would not exist? In an earlier article, she seems to shed some light on her meaning saying,

One of the illusions of theatre, I think, is the attempt to make audiences feel they can live in other worlds. I don't believe this. I prefer to acknowledge my differentness as an outsider, a traveler. So, the idea of creating a world on a stage is problematic for me. I would go so far as to say that the great texts, e.g. Greek drama, Shakespeare, Beckett may not need a stage, they are so complete as writing.<sup>130</sup>

So it is not the world as it exists on stage that she refers to, but rather the world as it is elucidated in "the great texts" *as texts*. This is, almost needless to say, a problematic formulation, as dramatic texts are never fully complete until they are adapted for performance. Her notion of performance world and my concept of the world of an individual production are clearly very different.

Marranca acknowledges that her study is incomplete saying, "One day the ecology of theater will be written, with performance space a branch of the science."<sup>131</sup> I would argue that "performance space" is the very basis of the ecology of theatre, especially in relation to how that space is construed in relation to place. It is the creation of *place*, the grounding of performance in a fictional world, and the building, making, or *poiesis*, of that world-place (or place-world) that constitute the ecology of theatre. If it were simply a matter of using the theatrical space in a more ecological way, then all these questions would have been answered by the "environmental theatre" movement of the 1960s in which Brook and Schechner worked. This movement, however, did not fully realise its goals, as Baz Kershaw explains in an article that begins to set out his formulation of an ecology of performance. He argues, in a particularly illuminating chastisement of modern theatrical practice, that when we examine it with "an especially open eye" we can see its shortcomings:

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<sup>130</sup> Bonnia Marranca, "Performance World, Performance Culture," *Performing Arts Journal* 30 10.3 (1987) 28.

<sup>131</sup> Marranca, *Ecologies* 75.



Then we might see, for example, that in environmental theatre scenic space is refashioned mainly to grant both actors and audiences greater dominance over the environment; in communal theatre that the human collective is ultimately its be-all and end-all; in performance art that the “nature” of individual identity is the dominant environment; in inter-cultural performance that it is the betwixt-and-between of peoples at the centre of the barter; in site-specific performance, surprisingly, that it is the human traces on the landscape or in the urban maze that shape the scenario; and that in participatory performance it is the politics of (usually) man-made oppressions under negotiation.<sup>132</sup>

While I do not fully share Kershaw’s somewhat negative view of theatrical performance types, his work is some of the most complete in terms of theatrical ecocriticism.

I have already drawn from his recent monograph on the subject, but it is important at this juncture to examine Kershaw’s work more closely, as his definitions of theatrical ecology are vital to my own views. In “The Theatrical Biosphere and Ecologies of Performance,” he begins from the following proposition:

So if we view the world, for the moment, as a kind of dialogue between culture and nature, then performance in theatre buildings is placed at two removes, as it were, from nature. From this perspective, an ecological essentialist would agree with the Platonic point that theatre cannot give us access to any truths about “nature” because it is a copy of a copy.<sup>133</sup>

However, if the world is a dialogue between culture and nature, and if theatrical performance (or “performance in theatre buildings”) is a cultural artifact, then it must be part of that dialogue with nature. Of course, Kershaw is using Platonic terms here, arguing that because the physical reality of the world as we know it is only a copy of the true “form” of things, theatre, as an imitation of life, is removed one step further from the ideal form. I follow a more Aristotelian line of thinking, arguing that theatre, through involvement with the audience, can evoke a sense of nature that may be “a copy of a copy,” but is evocative of the same sensuous engagement with the natural world. For Aristotle, tragedy was able to achieve transcendent meaning by evoking

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<sup>132</sup> Baz Kershaw, “The Theatrical Biosphere and Ecologies of Performance: a biological microcosm and the ‘theatre of the world’,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 16.2 (May 2000) 127.

<sup>133</sup> Kershaw, “The Theatrical Biosphere” 124.

the appropriate pleasure, rather than any and every emotion (14.53b10-15).<sup>134</sup> So theatre may be a copy of a copy, but it is not, cannot be divorced from the original completely.

Again, this relates to Phillips' argument (outlined in the previous chapter) that ecological critics need not be entrenched in an analysis of mimetic accuracy. Aristotle's emphasis on catharsis, on the effect of the tragedy on the audience, brings us back to ecopoetics, an approach that can allow us to understand the impact of an individual production through its participation with its world and with its audience, as well as understanding its imitation (or interaction) with the world at large. Kershaw concludes, "I think that performative events which use an ethically principled immersive participation, transforming participants, are most likely to lead to new ecological forms of performance."<sup>135</sup> Such events are crucial to an ecological theatre, and a transformative experience of the performance is a key to ecopoetics as a phenomenological discipline. However, it is also important to note that these immersive performances have influenced more mainstream theatrical performance, and continue to do so. We could say that the goal of audience immersion is a phenotype that indicates an adaptation – an alteration in the very genetic code of theatre.

Kershaw takes modern theatrical performance to task over numerous aspects of its process and practice. Interestingly, he takes special umbrage with the desire, bred out of auteur directorial styles and long rehearsal periods, to force every aspect of the production into a specific model. He says,

A voracious drive to exclude the unexpected tends to sever the "culture" of this theatre from the "nature" of the biosphere to produce what, in a sense, is a quasi-ecology. That is to say, an ecology that appears to be well connected to the world beyond itself, but which in fact is more or less pathologically abstracted from that world, often in ways that make it fundamentally anti-ecological, uncaring about the Earth's ecosystemic health. Looked at through this broader environmental perspective, most kinds of theatre are

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<sup>134</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967) 40.

<sup>135</sup> Kershaw, "The Theatrical Biosphere" 129.

always chasing an ideal ecology, a utopian ecology. The impossible dream of a perfectly self-sustaining ecosystem, a nightly Eden.<sup>136</sup>

Kershaw reads into theatre's quest for perfection, for eliminating unexpected events within the theatre, a certain level of "deep ecology." Of course, a self-sustaining theatrical ecosystem can be an effective imaginative activity, even if it is an impossibility. I must note that even in Kershaw's model, the theatrical world, idealised as it may be, is still based on the natural environment. And auteur directors such as Brook and Schechner, despite a possible level of utopianism, remain focused on adaptation and survival through ecopoetics, or the creation of performance environments.

In his book *Spaces of Hope*, David Harvey provides an illuminating reading of various utopian projects. They all led to spatial constriction, hierarchical ordering of society, and eventually oppression and self-destruction. He concludes, "Perhaps Utopia can never be realized without destroying itself. If so, then this profoundly affects how any utopianism of spatial form can function as a practical social form within political-economic life."<sup>137</sup> The quest for perfection within the theatrical world is a utopian venture, and does, in Kershaw's formulation, lead to self-destruction, albeit a slow form of suicide that sucks all the life out of theatre by turning it into a non-renewing entropic system. It must be noted that Kershaw is not the first to think of theatre in such terms. Peter Brook felt the same way in his book *The Empty Space*. Kershaw is the first to put the decline of Western theatre in such explicitly ecological terms, however. So while his project of searching for a way to rejuvenate the theatre through immersive performance techniques is certainly a quest foreshadowed by nearly every theatrical visionary in history, including Brook, he is the first to make the vital connection between ecology and theatrical vitality.

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<sup>136</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 59.

<sup>137</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000) 167.

Kershaw's critique centres around three specific aspects of modern theatrical production that he sees as particularly devastating to its ecosystemic health. The first is the system of audience disempowerment through the lack of participation. Many would argue that applause acts as a negative feedback loop: a good production gets more generous, louder, and more active applause, whereas a bad one elicits little more than silence. Kershaw argues to the contrary that applause has become part of a positive feedback loop, consistently draining the theatrical ecosystem of its energy as "other forms of participation [have] diminished," and that standing ovations are particularly indicative of the disempowerment of the audience.<sup>138</sup> The second aspect of modern theatre that Kershaw takes issue with is the staging of spectacle not as an expression of the natural world but as a referent to the human. He says,

Possibly there has always been a close connection between spectacle and disaster, because disaster unexpectedly unleashes extreme powers that rupture a world that human beings dream of keeping wholly intact, suddenly splitting open normality to expose its utter instability. It achieves this by threatening always to eliminate the human, to reduce it to total insignificance in the grand scheme – or chaos – of things.<sup>139</sup>

So rather than allow for the possibility of a natural spectacle independent of human involvement, spectacle is consistently linked to anthropocentric notions of disaster.

Finally, Kershaw links these two critiques to argue in a third vein that nature is no longer even a part of theatrical performance. Rather, nature serves only as a referent to culture in modern theatrical production. He says,

Firstly, as a place for the production of self-reflexive culture through performance in the staging of plays, say, the theatre assumes or proposes various versions of "nature" through its mimetic codes. Hence, for example, "nature" may be transmuted into "landscape" or "pastoral" or "wasteland". In this process the theatre experience becomes at least twice removed, as it were, from action in the wider environment: (a) by the institution of theatre itself and (b) by making metaphors of its object of attention.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 182-184 (quote from 184).

<sup>139</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 216.

<sup>140</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 305.

While others may argue that this distancing would allow for reflection, perhaps even giving audiences the chance to cast a critical eye upon their own world through the experience of a referential stage world, Kershaw concludes that the disempowerment of audience members (what he calls the transformation into spectators) prevents this from happening. He claims spectators must be empowered, given their freedom to become participants in the action of the production. In other words, if what occurs in the staging of a play can be called “performance,” then what the audience members must do, in engaging with that event, must be part of the performance.

It must be noted that Kershaw is setting out a challenge for theatrical production. His comments, for the most part, are dedicated to practitioners of theatre, and his quest is to find an ecological means of theatrical production. In his project, this necessarily will restore spectators to the level of participants, as well as reconfiguring concepts of theatrical space and restoring unity (or at least balance) to the relationship between humanity and nature within the theatre’s walls. While my project does not run contrary to this, in fact if practitioners were to engage in Kershaw’s practices my task would be significantly easier, it is not the same. He is seeking a new form of theatrical production, while my quest is for a new method of theatrical analysis. The two projects are certainly complementary, however, and Kershaw’s definition of terms in his introduction is invaluable to my thesis:

The terms “theatre ecology” and “performance ecology” reference theatres and performances *as* ecosystems. So “theatre ecology” (or “performance ecology”) refers to the interrelationships of all the factors of particular theatrical (or performance) systems, including their organic and non-organic components and ranging from the smallest and/or simplest to the greatest and/or most complex. Following uses in ecology, these terms can also refer to interrelationships between theatres (or performances) and their environments, especially when interdependence between theatres/performances and their environments is implied.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 15-16.

This is precisely what theatrical ecopoetics must take into account, analysing theatrical productions as systems, and the ways in which performances as cultural artifacts are created by their environment and create their world. Kershaw both prefaces and concludes his book saying that his goal is the search for hope, and maybe even a little “eco-sanity” within the theatre and performance projects, and of course, that is a goal that I share.

It is important to briefly examine the strand of theatrical ecocriticism that critiques Western theatre history. Primary among these are two articles by Ronald Grimes and one by Adam Sweeting and Thomas Crochunis, all of which criticise the humanism of Western theatre history and its enduring vestiges in modern theatrical practice. Sweeting and Crochunis provide an interesting analogous reading of realist theatre and wilderness preserves, arguing that three structural similarities link the two:

First, both rely on rigidly dualistic conceptualizations of space... A second similarity between these spaces stems from the way our experiences of both efface the cultural assumptions and structures that shape our performances, encouraging audiences or wilderness visitors to observe events as though they simply unfold on their own... And finally, both realist stages and wilderness spaces limit perspective and authorize what audiences are allowed to see and hear.<sup>142</sup>

They do not argue that preserved, or staged, wilderness spaces should be done away with, but that they limit the experience of the wild. The very fact that such spaces are set aside makes them staged, and encourages the same sort of passive, voyeuristic, observational audience as realist theatre, with its proscenium arch stage and its unbreakable fourth wall through which the spectators view the drama. They applaud the environmental theatre movement of the late 1960s for its dissolution of the rigid separation between audience and stage, and urge the same ideology for wilderness spaces. This leads to their conclusion, “If we understand space not as an inert

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<sup>142</sup> Adam Sweeting and Thomas Crochunis, “Performing the Wild: Rethinking Wilderness and Theater Spaces,” *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001) 326.

given condition but as something called into being by human and more-than-human performance, the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate gestures, places, and times will become visible.”<sup>143</sup> Using alternative terminology, Casey concurs: “By ‘space’ is meant a neutral, pre-given medium, a tabula rasa onto which the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed with place as the presumed result.”<sup>144</sup> One could argue that the stage, prior to any acting or scenery or music or lighting, is akin to space, and it is only once the play is inscribed on it that it *can* become place. As noted before, space and place are not mutually exclusive terms, but how a production attempts to create place from its theatrical space is an important aspect of this ecopoetic inquiry.

Grimes’s critique of theatre is more focused on his interest in ritual. In the later of his two articles, when discussing a musical work that he considers the pinnacle of ecological art, he says, “It aims at nothing less than a recovery of a sense of the sacred, one not bound to either the anthropomorphism of Christianity or Renaissance humanism.”<sup>145</sup> This sense of ritual, of the need to “recover” something that has been lost, whether sacred or not, is a key undercurrent in ecocriticism, one that is also evident in some of the experiments of theatre practitioners that led to the environmental theatre movement and in Brook’s theoretical work. Grimes is not purely concerned with theatrical performance as such, but with performance as action, as doing. He argues, “As long as performance is confined to performance halls, performance is no answer to the problem of saving the planet from toxicity and species evacuation. The best that aesthetic art

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<sup>143</sup> Sweeting and Crochunis 331.

<sup>144</sup> Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996) 14.

<sup>145</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, “Ritual theory and the environment,” *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance*, eds. Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim, and Claire Waterton (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell and the Sociological Review, 2003) 32.

can do is to mime the problem.”<sup>146</sup> He has a two-fold meaning here: as long as theatre is bounded by the walls of its theatrical space, it cannot be ecological; and as long as people remain content to observe performance, and not to perform themselves in the world at large, the modern ecological crisis will never be averted.

Grimes’s commentaries provide examples of what has been termed “deep ecology,” the ideology that our salvation as a species lies in a rejection of anthropocentrism, of a complete return to a pre-modern “state of nature.” This is evidenced by his comment on performers:

To dance the peacock or play the snake, you must become the peacock, be the snake. A deep-world performance is one in which performers are so drastically identified with the objects of their performance that there is no difference even though everybody knows animals and humans are different.<sup>147</sup>

While everyone may know that animals and humans are different, it is not without importance that humans are, in fact, animals. Meeker’s suggestion that play is an animal characteristic that is inherent to biological survival explicitly instructs readers that human play is necessary for the survival of our species. We may never see a snake mimic a human, but we certainly see apes do so, and sometimes quite successfully. The idea that one can become another living thing is preposterous, and even the staunchest supporter of “method” acting (in the sense of living the life of a character) would never suggest that the actor transmutes or morphs into his or her character. However, Grimes highlights the deep ecological belief in this possibility, which may be necessary for our survival so long as we maintain a grip on the difference between fact and fiction. Bate says, “The dream of deep ecology will never be realized upon the earth, but our survival as a species may be dependent on our capacity to dream it in the work of our

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<sup>146</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, “Performance is Currency in the Deep World’s Gift Economy: An Incantatory Riff for a Global Medicine Show,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 9.1 (Winter 2002) 151-152.

<sup>147</sup> Grimes, “Performance is Currency” 152.



imagination.”<sup>148</sup> A production creates this dream through its ecopoetics, and its world fires the imagination of the audience, especially in Kershaw’s participatory terms. The effectiveness of these creative and imaginative processes is part of an ecopoetic analysis.

In her introduction to the eco-drama issue of *Theater*, Erika Munk suggests that there is a difference between creating theatre with the “tools of an ecological politics”<sup>149</sup> and interpreting theatre with those tools, including ecological science. She voices this difference, saying that it is between “staged activism and aesthetic analysis, between the ecology of the outside world and the internal ecology of dramaturgical form.”<sup>150</sup> While works of eco-drama deserve praise and attention, the vast majority of theatrical performance on the planet is not ecological in nature, but as Munk says, recalling an earlier comparison, “It’s like the early days of contemporary feminism; everything cries out for interpretation.”<sup>151</sup>

Some of the most interesting interpretive ecocriticism on theatre has been done by Una Chaudhuri. Like most of the commentators already mentioned, she also begins from the viewpoint that Western theatre history is permeated by “a largely negative ecological vision.”<sup>152</sup> While she focuses on criticising realist drama from the early twentieth century, and lauding later plays with overtly ecological themes, she raises some important questions on theatre as a form that bear heavily on the very possibility of theatrical ecopoetics. In her earlier article, she asks the question outright: “What does representation – the fact itself of mimesis, of mediation – do to the meaning of nature?”<sup>153</sup> Clearly, the representation of the thing is not the thing itself. If it were, then Grimes’s comment above would not be so patently absurd.

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<sup>148</sup> Bate, *Song* 37-38.

<sup>149</sup> Erika Munk, “Green Thoughts,” *Theater* 25.1 (Spring/Summer 1994) 5.

<sup>150</sup> Munk 6.

<sup>151</sup> Munk 6.

<sup>152</sup> Una Chaudhuri, “‘There Must be a lot of Fish in that Lake’: Toward an Ecological Theater,” *Theater* 25.1 (Spring/Summer 1994) 24.

<sup>153</sup> Chaudhuri, “There Must be a lot of Fish” 29.

The question is important to examine more closely. If I were to play, say Henry V, I would not *be* Henry V, but I would be what the audience knows as Henry V. I use this character because he was an actual historical figure, though clearly fictionalised in Shakespeare's play, making the mimetic question even more complex. More simply, when a tree property is placed on stage, it is not a real tree. Even if it is a *real* tree, once growing in the earth, it has been removed from its place, and therefore no longer exists as a tree *per se* but as a stage property representing a tree. Of course there is a difference between a stage property that was once a real tree, and one made out of wood and plastic, but the difference in mimetic accuracy need not be insurmountable. In the introduction to *Nature Performed*, the editors state, "From a theatrical-performance domain, nature in performance troubles the delicate boundary between staged event and the world outside that event, at times, bringing a too material and presenced 'reality' into a crafted simulacra."<sup>154</sup> I suggest that perhaps this issue is over-thought in some cases. While the fiction being staged is not real, the characters are given body, voice, dimensions, and place through the physical presence of the actors. Similarly with the tree, it may not be a real tree, but through the creation of a world/place on the stage, for the interactions, realistic or not, between the tree and the human characters, it can unproblematically *be* a tree for the duration of the performance. This is not to support Grimes's assertions, which are, after all, directions to performers. Rather, I argue that it is in the reception, the audience's experience of the performance, that these transformations can occur. In terms of the ecopoetics of a performance work, we can hold "is" and "is not" together through a phenomenological understanding of how a production constructs its world, and how that world acts on an audience.

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<sup>154</sup> Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim, and Claire Waterton, "Introduction," *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance*, eds. Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim, and Claire Waterton (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell and the Sociological Review, 2003) 12.

In her book, Chaudhuri goes some way to answering her own question, or at least to providing an alternative to it: “If the real can be represented by the real itself, then representation does not have to settle for the limits and frames that constrict it in all the other [i.e. non-theatre] media.”<sup>155</sup> There are multiple levels of “reality” that we must contend with in discussing theatre: the fiction that is presented on stage is clearly not real, but there is a physical reality to the theatrical performance. The actors, the set, the theatre, they all exist in three dimensions, there is not only height and width, but depth as well. The picture-frame theatre may attempt to limit the dimensions of perception, providing something more like a cinematic approach, but it cannot change the fact that the audience perceives the performance in three dimensions. What Chaudhuri encourages is an expansion beyond the usual terminology of performance criticism, an ability to perceive place as it is constructed in the theatre. While she infrequently uses ecological terminology, the implications of her work are important for the formation of an ecopoetic approach to performance. Mimetic reality is not important: an *accurate* portrayal of the world as it exists outside the theatre’s walls is irrelevant to the power of place in the theatre. As critics, we must examine the scenography, the relationship between the actors and the scene and the audience, the lighting, the music, every aspect of theatre, in depth and detail and better understand the creation of stage worlds.

One of the most readily apparent differences between film and theatre is the former’s claim to photographic representation that is supposedly realistic. Cinema presents a moving photographic image that can be more realistic than staged performance, but it lacks the three-dimensional physicality of the theatre. Unlike theatre, film can present vast landscapes, it can show characters traveling between locations, it can create a sense of place by showing characters

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<sup>155</sup> Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: the Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) 23.

dwelling in their landscapes. In short, film can be more all-encompassing than theatre in terms of an ecopoetic construction. At the same time, however, the narrow focus of the camera lens remains a limiting factor. In the theatre, an audience member can look at varied points of the stage, where action may or may not be occurring, while in film one must follow the camera's gaze. So while film can be more expansive in its representation of things, it is in fact more limited in terms of a multiplicity of viewpoints that one can achieve in the theatre or in literature. Film ecocritic Adrian Ivakhiv notes the various negative aspects of the camera's limiting view saying that it "serves as an instrument of distancing, even of domination, enabling an objectification, decontextualization, dehistoricization, and commodification of the things that make up the world, making us spectators rather than participants and ultimately spreading a dangerous sense or irreality into our midst."<sup>156</sup> This is an interesting paradox when viewed in light of cinema's claims to photographic realism.

Most ecocritical studies of cinema, like other branches of ecocriticism, tend to focus on nature documentaries or fictional films with explicitly environmental themes. Only recently have critics begun to expand their horizons and explore the ecological ramifications of popular and arthouse films that have ostensibly little to do with ecology. Many of these studies focus on the role of the natural world in film, its importance in the telling of the story, and the relationship between human characters and that world. We cannot forget that, while cinema may be capable of photographically capturing real natural landscapes, it is mediated through the artistic vision of directors and editors, and the finished product that audiences see is a produced landscape, one taken out of its real context for its aesthetic value in film. As Bolter and Grusin note in their study of late-modern media, "A transparent interface would be one that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in an immediate relationship

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<sup>156</sup> Adrian Ivakhiv, "Green Film Criticism and Its Futures," *ISLE* 15.2 (Summer 2008) 17.

to the contents of that medium.”<sup>157</sup> Film can be immersive, as can theatre, but it never escapes its own status as an aesthetic medium. It may refer to its contents, mediate and represent the natural world, but it cannot allow a spectator to dwell there. Most ecocritical studies of cinema retain the holistic vision of ecology that is similarly entrenched in theatre studies. Fergus Daly argues in his ecocritical study of film that cinema mostly presents a competitive image of humanity and nature, with the characters struggling to overcome the challenges set by the world, or a nature that is relegated to little more than a backdrop to human drama. He argues that a truly ecological view of film would restore a “univocity” to humanity and nature in which “the externality of man and nature to one another has been overcome.”<sup>158</sup> Ivakhiv, sophisticating this notion, says,

A deeper or more holistic eco-cinecriticism, however, would closely analyze not only the representations found in a film but the telling of the film itself – its discursive and narrative structures, its inter-textual relations with the larger world, its capacities for extending or transforming perception of the larger world – and the actual contexts and effects of the film and its technical and cultural (entertainment industry, art world) apparatus in the larger world.<sup>159</sup>

As in theatrical ecocriticism, we must take into account the whole of a work, especially in Shakespearean adaptations where we have a dialogic relationship between the original play and the adaptive film.

Jhan Hochman’s study is far less appreciative of film, or of any cultural artifact for that matter. He states,

Far better it would be for critics to admit and theorize the intensity of culture’s manufactured distance from and gridification of worldnature before too easily latching

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<sup>157</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1999) 23-24.

<sup>158</sup> Fergus Daly, “Immanence and Transcendence in the Cinema of Nature,” Sense of Cinema website <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/11/nature.html>> (accessed 14 Feb. 2007).

<sup>159</sup> Ivakhiv 18.

onto facile and convenient epiphanies that humans are nature, know Nature, or that nature is (like) us.<sup>160</sup>

Rather than arguing that the evocation of natural scenes and the representations of beneficial relationships between humans and nature can help heal this “manufactured” rift, as Daly does, Hochman argues that nature needs space to heal itself. He states that humans should accept this created distance from nature and so ecocriticism should focus on those artifacts that embrace this rift. Obviously, film and all other cultural artifacts are necessarily distanced from nature in a way, but Hochman utterly rejects even the possibility that a mediated nature can be positive. Daly disagrees, arguing that the best ecological film presents a connection between humanity and nature:

Life is presented as purely immanent to itself and without a lapse into transcendent views of nature such as pantheism and animism. Univocity, the equality of all forms of being – where everything that exists sings in the same voice – has rarely been achieved in the history of cinema, and when it has it has only been in brief flourishes. Maybe such a universe is uninhabitable, unsustainable to human perception.<sup>161</sup>

Daly wishes for cinema to present a vision of equality between humanity and nature that he admits may be fallacious, while Hochman wants film to embrace the separation between them and allow nature the distance he believes it needs to heal itself.

It seems that many ecocritical views on cinema fail to take an appropriately critical view of the material on hand. They are stuck in the mode of critical reading that focuses on immanent authorial meaning rather than understanding the multiplicity of viewpoints brought about by Bakhtin and the other theorists who followed him. Cinema is not merely moving photography, and while it is more controlled than theatre by the primary readers (directors, editors) there are still a multitude of views amongst the consumers. An appropriately “critical” ecocritical view of

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<sup>160</sup> Jhan Hochman, *Green Cultural Studies: Nature in Film, Novel, and Theory* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998) 9.

<sup>161</sup> Daly <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/11/nature.html>>.

film will necessarily take into account how the film creates its fictional world, how it depicts the natural world, and how the story fits in the sense of adaptation, to this imagined reality. Sheena Rogers argues that, like the move toward immersive theatre in the 1960s, the best cinema pulls its audience into its world by asking them to imagine how it works:

As observers, we become immersed in the world of the motion picture because it shares its natural (nonsymbolic) meaning with the real world it depicts. Once immersed, we can revel in the profoundly engaging task of decoding secondary meanings and then, or perhaps later with our friends, construct a satisfying edifice of intrinsic meaning from our shared understanding of the wider social and historical context of the work.<sup>162</sup>

In the same way that Bate's original notion of ecopoetics asks us to imagine a new created world and a dwelling within it, ecological film criticism requires the audience to engage with the subject of the inquiry.

Finding ecological resonances in popular film has been the primary critical concern for more recent cinematic ecocritics.<sup>163</sup> This is exactly what Pat Brereton does in *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema*. Brereton looks at evocations of sublime nature in mostly popular films in order to better understand how they reflect contemporary environmental ideology and/or affect an ecological discourse. Brereton sets out his project thus,

Within many blockbuster films, the evocation of nature and sublime spectacle helps to dramatise contemporary ecological issues and debates. Filmic time and space is dramatised, often above and beyond strict narrative requirements, and serves, whether accidentally or not, to reconnect audiences with their inclusive ecosystem.<sup>164</sup>

Brereton's case studies are diverse, ranging from the "spaghetti Westerns" of Sergio Leone to Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, a film that not only produces spectacular evocations of natural terrain but also problematises the idea of human meddling in natural evolution. Brereton's study

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<sup>162</sup> Sheena Rogers, "Through Alice's Glass: The Creation and Perception of Other Worlds in Movies, Pictures, and Virtual Reality," *Moving Image Theory: Ecological Considerations*, eds. Joseph D. Anderson and Barbara Fisher Anderson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2005) 219-220.

<sup>163</sup> See also David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

<sup>164</sup> Pat Brereton, *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema* (Bristol and Portland: Intellect, 2005) 11.

exposes these evocations through what he calls “symptomatic interpretation.”<sup>165</sup> Rather than focus on explicating the deeper intentions of the individual director or writer, this approach “looks for repressed (ideological) meaning.”<sup>166</sup> Ecopoetics is not necessarily an intentional directorial or authorial objective. Nevertheless, the ecopoetics of a performance frequently come through the artistically chosen representation of the fictional world.

Sean Cubitt’s book *EcoMedia* is a strong example of this form of reading, almost completely ignoring directorial intention in favour of reading films through their presentation of the natural world and the human interaction with it. His case studies vary widely, from what he calls the French eco-apocalyptic cycle of Luc Besson (*The Last Battle*, *Subway*, and *The Fifth Element*) to the recent *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by Peter Jackson. Cubitt summarises his central argument saying,

The environment environs the mental, a mentality which is hypostasised as culture, a common set of beliefs and values, a way of life which, in Raymond Williams’ expression, is whole. Latour’s investigations suggest that no human way of life is whole, entire unto itself. That is too the burden of systems theory and ecological sciences. Leopold’s land no more stops at my skin than my consciousness stops inside the bone box at the top of my neck or at my epidermis, where it touches the world and the world touches me back. The assessment of values as the best achievable for the greatest number is founded on a mistaken belief: that the individuals or communities jostling for the good are either separate from one another or from the world that permeates them.<sup>167</sup>

Cubitt posits a different sort of understanding, one that accepts that holism is untenable, hence the burden it places on ecology. However, he also refutes the pressure of individualism, suggesting that the interconnectedness of all things (the first law of ecology) makes it impossible for any individual to be completely separate from any other agent in its environment. He argues,

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<sup>165</sup> Brereton 36.

<sup>166</sup> Brereton 36.

<sup>167</sup> Sean Cubitt, *Ecomedia* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005) 136. The references he makes are to Raymond Williams’s conception of holism inspired by Leavis; Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT) which posits that no human life is complete because it is influenced by non-human actors (actants) and examines the interdependence not only of material things but of semiotic concepts, and the interaction between the two; and Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic,” often considered a foundational position of modern environmentalism.



in other words, that while humans may retain the ability to individually interpret the signals we are given from the world around us, we must not forget that it is the environing world that creates these signals, that we are constantly interacting with things that are outside our control. The specificity encouraged by contemporary ecology, once embraced by ecocriticism, will push the field to the interpretation of these signals, to the understanding that the linkages between ourselves and everything around us cannot be severed. The understanding of these connections, the interpretation of these relationships, revealed in the subjects of study (works of art from virtually any discipline), is the most important goal of ecocriticism.

The remainder of this thesis is divided into case studies of modern performances of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, and some of the contextual issues that surround and environ these productions and films. I choose these two plays for several reasons. First, each has a major meteorological event in it, which will be revealing for an understanding of how the performance constitutes and conceives of its environment. Second, both contain issues of impacement and displacement in regard to characters. Examination of these issues will be particularly revelatory not only of how the creation of place out of performance space can be achieved, but also in the relation of the fictional characters with their fictional world. Third, both plays deal with the natural world, and various ways of conceiving the relationship between humanity and nature. In fact, while theatre can be considered a world-building, or ecopoetic, project, individual characters (Lear and Prospero predominantly, but potentially others as well) may engage in their own world-building projects. The success or failure of these internal efforts is revelatory for the human-nature relationship in addition to the study of the individual production's own creation of its world.

In chapter three, I examine Peter Brook's 1962 *King Lear* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. I read Brook's production intertextually with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and contextually with Beckett's *Endgame* and various cultural moments outside the theatre. I set this production apart as a turning point in the director's career, arguing that his experiments in spatial form grew from the ecopoetics of this *King Lear*. The first part of the thesis concludes in chapter four with a study of Peter Brook's film of *King Lear* as an end-cap for many of his early theories. His film is viewed contextually with a reading of Grigori Kozintsev's contemporaneous film of the play to reveal an even deeper engagement with ecological conceptions in Brook's work. Part two begins with an investigation of adaptation as a means for theatrical survival of Shakespeare's plays. Chapter five is dedicated to viewing the science-fiction classic *Forbidden Planet* as an ecologically-negative retelling of *The Tempest*. I set this film in contrast to Brook's 1957 RSC production of the play, and contextualise it within the nature-culture dialectic. Chapter six is dedicated to Aimé Césaire's adaptation as a more ecologically open and engaging adaptation. I contextualise Césaire's work in relation to post-colonialism and Brook's experimental 1968 adaptation of *The Tempest*. This chapter also examines the possibilities for a study of post-colonial ecopoetics, as they are expressed in Césaire's work. My case studies conclude, in chapter seven, with a study of Rupert Goold's 2007 production of *The Tempest* for the RSC. This performance, set in an adapted atmosphere not at all like the tropical island Shakespeare envisioned for the play, brings up questions of radical interpretation and modernisation. Incorporated into this chapter is a brief conclusion which sketches the paths to the future for theatrical ecocriticism through the examination of Shakespeare in performance.

## **Part 1: *King Lear***

### Chapter 3:

#### Peter Brook's *King Lear* on Stage

One of the difficulties in writing about Peter Brook's staging of *King Lear*<sup>168</sup> is that so much has already been written. It becomes difficult not only to say something new about the production, but to take into account all that has already been said. Brook's remains one of the most influential stagings of the play in the twentieth century. It is precisely because so much has been written about this production that it is so important to undertake an ecological analysis of it: one of the main efforts of the ecocritical project is to re-read "canonical" texts. In a personal response to my questions regarding *King Lear*, Peter Brook said, "One doesn't work on a production in order to express theories. You see exactly what you wish to find."<sup>169</sup> Perhaps this is why so many have written successfully about this production, there is so much to see in it. Much of the critical work on this production focuses directly on its setting and the influences that went into the crafting of the performance environment. I engage with these works in order to reconstruct Brook's stage world, and to develop an ecopoetic understanding of this world. In an interview published in 1977 Brook said, "I think one must be led to a play by certain instincts which at the same time reflect something of one's times – it's a violent play at a violent moment, or a joyful play at a moment when one needs joy."<sup>170</sup> My approach takes into account the context of the wider world in 1962, the critical work that influenced the creation of this *Lear* world, and the work of performance critics that have since examined the production. My central

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<sup>168</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, *King Lear*, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, opening 6 Nov. 1962; Aldwych Theatre, London, opening 12 Dec. 1962; European Tour opening 18 May 1963; New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center, 18 May 1964.

<sup>169</sup> Peter Brook, personal e-mail, 23 Aug. 2006.

<sup>170</sup> Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare: Interviews with Contemporary Directors* (London: Croom Helm; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1977) 118.

argument is that Brook's *Lear* changed the way the play is viewed predominantly through the use of a new and challenging setting for the story, and that the creation of this performance world can be viewed best from an ecological perspective.

The 1962 Royal Shakespeare Company production was not Brook's first engagement with *King Lear* in performance. He directed the 1953 live television broadcast of the play with Orson Welles as the eponymous king.<sup>171</sup> This earlier revival was heavily edited to fit CBS's two-hour timeslot, and was aired live, so all the scenes were filmed in the same space. Brook was constrained by the comparatively small scope of the television screen. Tony Howard compares it to his later feature film of *King Lear* saying that both are "stud[ies] in space – but in 1953 claustrophobia is the key."<sup>172</sup> While this production is considered relatively minor in the overall scope of Brook's career (evidenced by the relative lack of critical scrutiny), it was the place where his conceptions of the play began to grow into what became his later adaptations. He experimented with shots: using non-traditional close-ups and frames, as well as placing actors in the background of a scene, visible through a crowd of characters in the foreground.<sup>173</sup> It was an experiment in creating a world in which the play would fit, and it did not work. Critics at the time were mostly negative toward the televised performance. Nevertheless, it may have provided Brook with the impetus to continue approaching *Lear* from a non-traditional path, and its use of the small-screen space certainly pushed Brook toward his experiments with stage space and cinematic space in his later versions of the play.

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<sup>171</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, *King Lear*, actor Orson Welles, *Omnibus*, CBS-TV, 18 Oct. 1953.

<sup>172</sup> Tony Howard, "When Peter Met Orson: The 1953 CBS *King Lear*," *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the plays on film, TV, and video*, eds. Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 125.

<sup>173</sup> H.R. Coursen, *Watching Shakespeare on Television* (Rutherford, Madison, and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1993) 99.

At the same time Brook began work on his RSC *King Lear*, the modern environmental movement was born through Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring*.<sup>174</sup> This work was first published in serial form in *The New Yorker* during the summer of 1962, then simultaneously published as a monograph in America and Great Britain that autumn. *Silent Spring* scrutinized the agrochemical industry's use of pesticides. Carson herself had been diagnosed with cancer prior to its publication and would die less than two years after. Prior to *Silent Spring*, she worked as a marine biologist, focusing on coastal and marine ecosystems. In *Silent Spring*, she brought the ecosystem model to bear on the abuse of chemical pesticides in farming, showing the detrimental effects on the environment and on humans. She wrote of the planet as

a web of life in which there are intimate and essential relations between plants and the earth, between plants and other plants, between plants and animals. Sometimes we have no choice but to disturb these relationships, but we should do so thoughtfully, with full awareness that what we do may have consequences remote in time and place.<sup>175</sup>

Unlike Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, Carson's ecosystem model understood nature as the place of interaction between individuals. Most importantly, her work in *Silent Spring* was gripping to lay readers, who organized and took action to avert the results of pollution theorized in the book.

It is not my intent to argue that, while Carson's work had a surprising public impact in the U.S.A. and the U.K. at exactly the time Brook was formulating his *King Lear*, the former had any effect on the latter. Rather, Carson's work provides an ideological model for environmental thinking, and her vision of the future engaged (and continues to engage) the imagination. I read Carson not as an influence on Brook, but as a work that can be viewed intertextually with Brook's production. The two works engage the same issues of public debate and environmental imagining. In order to understand this more fully, I must examine Carson's work in more detail, and discuss the impact of apocalyptic rhetoric on the environmental movement and on ecopoetic

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<sup>174</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; Cambridge: Riverside, 1962).

<sup>175</sup> Carson, *Silent Spring* 64.

thinking. Nowhere is her imaginative project more evident than in the first chapter of *Silent Spring*, titled “A Fable for Tomorrow.” In it, Carson poetically sketches the history of an American agricultural community that once dwelt harmoniously in the land, but poisoned the environment with pesticides. This introductory chapter begins in traditional storytelling fashion with a “once upon a time” opening: “There was once a town in the heart of American where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings.”<sup>176</sup> In order to increase agricultural output, the farmers used pesticides against crop-eating insects. The chapter traces the path these poisons take through the food chain, eventually affecting the human population. The first sign of ecological collapse is the lack of birdsong, thus the title of the book, itself a reference to Keats’s *La belle dame sans merci*. The most enduring aspect of the book, this opening, engages with one of the more contentious elements of environmental discourse, apocalyptic rhetoric. The contention lies in the effectiveness of apocalyptic commentary in contrast to scientific accuracy. It has been necessary to use apocalyptic imagery and rhetoric in order to advance environmental ideology, but it is widely viewed as a false predictive model. We are, after all, still dwelling on this planet despite all the alarms.

In his influential survey of ecology, Robert McIntosh identifies Carson’s place in the apocalyptic narrative:

Rachel Carson (1962) was both vilified and hailed for dramatically, and correctly, demonstrating the hazards of pesticides. Numerous ecologists and others speaking in the name of ecology expressed concern about the state of the environment. All these formed what were lumped together as the “Doomsday syndrome” by one of those who complained that threats to the environment and humanity were exaggerated and argued that they ignored the potential of science and technology to resolve the various aspects of the environmental or ecological crisis.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Carson, *Silent Spring* 1.

<sup>177</sup> McIntosh 306.

More than forty years later, apocalyptic rhetoric is still utilized within environmental ideology, primarily as a tool for engaging the imagination of the general public. This is part of the eco-poetics of Carson's work: she used literary tools to engage her audience, partially masking the scientific achievement of her book, but advancing her political aims. After all, *Silent Spring* resulted in the banning of the pesticide DDT and the eventual formation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in America.

While Carson gave the apocalyptic narrative a distinctive ecological spin, there was a far more concrete example of apocalypse in October of 1962: the Cuban Missile Crisis. Of course, the human and ecological devastation of World War II was less than a generation off in the past, and escalation of the Cold War to the brink of nuclear confrontation brought many of these earlier horrors back to the surface. New fears of a nuclear apocalypse entered the *zeitgeist*, and the image of a world engulfed in the flames of nuclear fission became the common popular vision of the apocalypse. In fact, the devastation wrought by nuclear weaponry on Japan at the end of World War II was part of the inspiration for Russian director Grigori Kozintsev's film adaptation of *King Lear* (discussed in more detail in chapter four). As for Brook, his stage version of *King Lear* was in the final months of rehearsal during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the international crisis certainly left its mark on his production. Numerous reviewers perceived a connection between the staged world and the world outside the theatre's walls, entrenching the production firmly in the space where art and nature meet, intermingle, and influence one another. My eco-poetic interpretation of this production explores the reactions of these reviewers, and the way the fictional stage world of Brook's *King Lear* was tied to the real world in which it was rooted.



Before examining this stage world in more detail, I must address the place of apocalyptic rhetoric in ecopoetics. There are two primary arguments against the use of apocalyptic rhetoric within the environmental movement. The first is that such commentary can be taken literally, leading to the charge of failed prophecy by those seeking to discredit environmental and ecological commentators. Of course, the goal of any apocalyptic rhetoric is not to literally predict the future, but to alter its course, to effect change through the inspiration of an audience (usually the general public). In this way, the use of apocalyptic rhetoric engages in world-creation, providing an “if-then” scenario that is designed not to be a strictly realistic model of the future, but an imaginative exercise in a potential reality. The “silent spring” envisioned by Carson did not become a reality because her elucidation of the negative outcomes of pesticide use helped create the changes necessary to avoid her imagined world. According to a later assessment of Carson’s work, “The clarity and poetic force she achieved in *Silent Spring*...gave the book transforming political power. In an introduction to the 1994 edition of *Silent Spring*, Vice President Al Gore says it ‘changed the course of history’ (xv).”<sup>178</sup> Of course, Al Gore has carved his own niche in environmental activism with the book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (1992) and more recently with the film *An Inconvenient Truth*. This film, while engaging with environmental apocalypticism, takes a more measured approach, urging viewers with scientific details and calmly delivered speeches to avert ecological disaster. Nevertheless, Gore’s comment in reference to Carson’s work shows the power her apocalyptic rhetoric had on its audience.

The second argument against apocalyptic rhetoric in environmental literature is that it has the potential to become dangerously anti-human. This can occur in two ways. Apocalypticism

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<sup>178</sup> William Nichols, “Environmentalism and the Legitimacy of Hope,” *Kenyon Review* 18.3-4 (Summer/Fall 1996) 212.

can lead to a sense of overprotection that risks bending social justice to environmental will. An “us versus them” mentality is produced that denigrates social relationships and produces uneven privileges for some groups. The environmental justice movement seeks to empower all members of the human population to act in ways that do not damage the natural environment. It is often noted that there is a paradox in environmentalism: privileged Westerners are the most vociferous environmentalists because they have the money to spend on commodities that do not damage the environment, or are guilty of spending money on those that do. The environmental justice movement seeks to broaden the spectrum of those who can contribute to ecologically-beneficial means of production and consumption, while also ensuring that impoverished and/or developing regions do not suffer the brunt of pollution. The other anti-human result of apocalyptic rhetoric is the privileging of untouched, pristine wilderness, sometimes to the detriment of the human population. Ecocritic Robin Morris Collin argues, “Defining environmentalism in ways which limit [it] to a conversation about the glory of depopulated landscape (unthinkingly?) endorses an important strand of the apocalyptic vision: only when the majority of humans are destroyed will Earth be perfected.”<sup>179</sup> This argument is similar to the end result of ecocritical commentaries relying on the Gaia hypothesis: we (meaning human beings) will not be here to experience it, but we should be happy because the environment will be healthy.

Despite these potential negative outcomes, apocalyptic rhetoric can be utilized for the benefit of environmental political goals. As Collin suggests from a psychoanalytical perspective, “The apocalypse is not so much about death or annihilation as it is about the perceived need to change.”<sup>180</sup> The point of an apocalyptic rhetorical strategy is to provoke reaction, predominantly imaginative reaction. In response to apocalyptic rhetoric or imagery, the audience imaginatively

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<sup>179</sup> Robin Morris Collin, “The Apocalyptic Vision, Environmentalism, and a Wider Embrace,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 13.1 (Winter 2006) 4.

<sup>180</sup> Collin 2.

experiences a created world, one that exists in order to inspire change in the real world.

Lawrence Buell, in his landmark ecocritical book *The Environmental Imagination*, states,

Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal. Of no other dimension of contemporary environmentalism, furthermore, can it be said so unequivocally that the role of the imagination is central to the project; for the rhetoric of apocalypticism implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis.<sup>181</sup>

Buell's argument goes to the heart of the ecopoetic project: apocalypse forces an imaginative response, providing a meeting place for art and environment. Apocalyptic works are not "realistic" in the sense that they often exaggerate the problems and consequences in the natural world that must be addressed by a change in the cultural world. Rather, they are efforts at imagining the world as it could be if those changes do not occur. Apocalypse occupies the middle ground where art and environment overlap, interact, and cease to be mutually exclusive entities.

In this ecopoetic examination of Brook's *King Lear*, I argue that the production utilizes apocalyptic imagery in its staging, engaging the environmental imagination of its audience. In his own words, Brook describes the world of his production thus:

In the theatre it seemed to me the play demanded great freedom, and a minimum of elements. Yet an empty stage, with nothing, would not give the support to make you feel that this is a real story about real people. So, by trial and error, I made a set where there was sort of a grey-white surround, and within it elements made out of rusty iron that we left for weeks to go rusty in the rain. The leather and iron gave something real, yet the image was extremely bare so that you had an impression of space, of endless space, which was purely theatrical because it was a space of the imagination.<sup>182</sup>

So Brook took pains to make sure that his fictional world, this "space of the imagination" that encompassed *Lear*, was grounded in the real world. The contextual elements of the set design, the leather costumes and rusty iron that accented the vast space, provided the production with

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<sup>181</sup> Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap, 1995) 285.

<sup>182</sup> Ed. Dale Moffitt, *Between Two Silences: Talking with Peter Brook* (London: Methuen, 2000) 91-92.

points of reference to a physical world (see appendix, figure one). Brook was careful to maintain this balance between the purely imaginative and the physically imminent, a key to understanding his work ecopoetically. He said, “If what you put on the stage is purely in the world of the imagination, rapidly you find it something that isn’t rooted in reality; you find that one way or the other there have to be certain natural elements that give a basis to what you’re doing.”<sup>183</sup> Numerous reviewers sensed the “real” elements not only grounded the imaginative space of the performance, but actually connected the performance world to the world outside the theatre, as will be seen.

The same year he directed *King Lear*, Brook told the Oxford University Dramatic Society, “I am absolutely incapable of solving a production other than through the scenery. The set is a summing-up of everything that one has felt and studied in production...I worked on the set of *Lear* for about a year.”<sup>184</sup> Obviously, there are a great many elements that go into a theatrical production, but it seems that Brook, at this point in his career at least, was obsessed with the ground on which a production was based. The set, when combined with an understanding of the space of the theatre building itself, is the environment for a production. It is literally the *terra firma* on which any theatrical performance must be based, and is thus vital to the success of any play-world. In designing and creating the set, Brook was engaged in his own version of world-creation, he ecopoetically invented this vast, empty, imaginative space. Through his process of trial-and-error, he was constantly destroying and reshaping the world of the production. It is recorded in several places that he scrapped his original set design in somewhat dramatic fashion prior to the start of rehearsals.<sup>185</sup> Paul Scofield, due to play *Lear*,

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<sup>183</sup> Moffitt 90.

<sup>184</sup> Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves, *Peter Brook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 51.

<sup>185</sup> Hunt and Reeves 51; Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point...1946-1987* (New York, Cambridge, et al.: Harper and Row, 1987) 12.

was put on medical rest, allowing Brook time to try various alternatives during the delay in the production schedule. The bareness of the set was a departure from set designs earlier in his career, which were largely illusionist and colourful, such as the Watteau-inspired set of *Love's Labours Lost*. This was also a departure from the previous RSC productions of *King Lear*, which utilised elaborate scenography. Often the play was forced into a constricting world of ancient paganism (as in the George Devine-directed production starring Michael Redgrave in 1953) or set in an impressionist painting of unrecognisable shapes and wild colours (as in Devine's 1955 production starring John Gielgud).

Thus, the set that Brook designed for *King Lear* was different not only from previous takes on the play but also from his own earlier work. He was at a turning point in his career. After this production, he began to experiment further with space and form, work that would eventually lead to the publication of his monograph on the subject, *The Empty Space*. It would be going a step too far to argue that Brook's destruction of his original set was itself an apocalyptic act, but the barren world that resulted can certainly be understood in apocalyptic terms. Most importantly, it was Brook's efforts to change things, to find a new spatial understanding of theatrical production, that tie him to ecopoetics and apocalyptic strategies. Ecocritics Killingsworth and Palmer argue,

To employ apocalyptic rhetoric is to imply the need for radical change, to mark oneself as an outsider in a progressive culture, to risk alienation, and to urge others out into the open air of political rebellion. The apocalyptic narrative is an expansive and offensive rhetorical strategy.<sup>186</sup>

Brook's new view of the world of *King Lear* was certainly expansive (his efforts to achieve the infinite space of the imagination) and offensive (as will be seen when discussing the responses of

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<sup>186</sup> M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, "Millennial Ecology: the Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming*," *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, eds. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) 41.

reviewers). Most importantly, it was an effort to change the state of the theatre, and Brook, already an outsider in many ways, was setting himself even further apart from the theatrical norm with this production. In their biography of Brook, his sometime collaborators Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves claim, “Over thirty years later, it is difficult to remember how directors saw *Lear* before Brook. The production was one of those theatre events that change people’s perceptions of received material.”<sup>187</sup> Theatre critic Benedict Nightingale backs up their superlative comment on Brook’s production saying, “A bare or barish stage is now usual, whether or not the explicit emphasis is the emptiness of *Lear*’s universe.”<sup>188</sup> The end goal of any apocalyptic strategy is to engage the imagination, the same goal that Brook pursued with his revolutionary *King Lear* world. Thirty years after the production, the director argued, “The absence of scenery is a prerequisite for the function of the imagination.”<sup>189</sup> So the theatrical change sought by this performance and the environmental change sought by those like Rachel Carson are not so far apart after all. The change is reliant on the imaginative success of world-creation.

Brook’s main intellectual inspiration for the creation of this world was Jan Kott’s essay “*King Lear* or *Endgame*,”<sup>190</sup> which argued that Shakespeare’s play prefigured Beckett’s in its use of the grotesque in its tragic arc, especially in the Gloucester subplot and at Dover Cliff. Kott’s critical bent was to show how Shakespeare’s work still fits in the modern world, and his essay obviously impacted Brook’s efforts to make *King Lear* a relevant imaginative experience for the audience. He says of the play, “All that remains at the end of this gigantic pantomime is earth –

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<sup>187</sup> Hunt and Reeves 50.

<sup>188</sup> Benedict Nightingale, “Some Recent Productions,” *Lear from Study to Stage: Essays in Criticism*, eds. James Ogden and Arthur H. Scouten (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997) 229.

<sup>189</sup> Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1993) 26.

<sup>190</sup> Jan Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1965). Kott’s book was not translated into English until 1965, but individual chapters, including the chapter on *King Lear* were translated into other languages before this date, and Brook read the French translation.

empty and bleeding. On this earth, through which a tempest has passed leaving only stones, the King, the Fool, the Blind Man and the Madman carry on their distracted dialogues.”<sup>191</sup> Arguing from a perspective informed by the devastation of both nature and culture in Europe during World War II, Kott saw in Beckett’s play a new world for Shakespeare’s, one in which nature is all but gone. He says, “The exposition of *King Lear* shows a world that is to be destroyed.”<sup>192</sup> In Beckett, however, the world has already been destroyed and the aftermath is all that is left: “All that remains of nature is sand in the dustbins, a flea, and the part of man that belongs to nature: his body.”<sup>193</sup> Brook’s assistant director Charles Marowitz published his notes on the production process as his “*Lear Log*.” In it, he draws a direct comparison between the two plays: “The world of this *Lear*, like Beckett’s world, is in a constant state of decomposition.”<sup>194</sup> It is important to understand the world of Beckett’s *Endgame* in order to understand the world of Brook’s *Lear*.

Beckett’s play centres on the absurdist interactions between Hamm, who cannot stand, and his servant Clov, who cannot sit. Hamm’s parents, Nagg and Nell, also appear briefly, trapped in the aforementioned dustbins. Everything in this play occurs within the walls of a single room, though there are references to the kitchen, to which Clov frequently retreats, and to the outside world. The outside world can be seen by the characters through two windows of the main room, though it is only revealed to the audience through the play’s exposition. The following dialogue reveals a central aspect of Beckett’s world:

HAMM:	Nature has forgotten us.
CLOV:	There’s no more nature.
HAMM:	No more nature! You exaggerate.

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<sup>191</sup> Kott 147.

<sup>192</sup> Kott 103.

<sup>193</sup> Kott 106.

<sup>194</sup> Charles Marowitz, “*Lear Log*,” *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, comp. David Williams (London: Methuen, 1988) 6.

CLOV: In the vicinity.  
 HAMM: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!  
 CLOV: Then she hasn't forgotten us.<sup>195</sup>

For Hamm, his own materiality is proof that nature still exists, however distant it might be.

Because he feels the physicality, because he can still perceive in a sensual manner, then nature must still exist. A few moments later, Hamm, in a fit of ecstasy perhaps, exclaims, "I'd go into the woods. My eyes would see...the sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me.

[*Pause.*] Nature!"<sup>196</sup> Clearly, the natural world is something he misses, something he has not seen in a long time, but because he exists he believes it still exists. Beckett's world is one in which the connection between humanity and the environment is irreparably severed.

In a recent conference paper, Richard Begam argued that the world of Beckett's play is an apocalyptic landscape, and that the end of this world may have come in the form of a flood. His basis for this commentary is that Hamm's name comes from the Biblical story of Noah and the flood, and that Beckett references *The Tempest* several times in the play, suggesting that Beckett was at least partially influenced by Shakespeare. Begam argues, "The world is largely bereft of 'world'."<sup>197</sup> While it is impossible to try to ground Beckett's absurdist play in any sort of reality, Begam's argument certainly seems plausible, especially considering the reality of the toxic soup that flooded New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. A similar sort of poison seems to be responsible for the play-world's sclerosis and toxicity. Hamm recounts the story of a man who comes to visit him, and he repeatedly exclaims, sometimes in the context of the story and sometimes breaking the continuity of the tale, "You're on earth, there's no cure for that!" At another moment, Hamm loses his temper and shouts, "But what in God's name do you imagine?"

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<sup>195</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) 97.

<sup>196</sup> Beckett 100.

<sup>197</sup> Richard Begam, "Endgame and Performativity," Samuel Beckett Forum, MLA Convention, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Chicago, 30 Dec. 2007.



That the earth will awake in spring? That the rivers and seas will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven still for imbeciles like you?"<sup>198</sup> It seems as if Rachel Carson's vision, the silent spring, has occurred in this world, and that, according to Hamm at least, there is no cure for the disease. Finally, as the play draws toward its close, Clov looks out the window and spies "a potential procreator," a small boy.<sup>199</sup> This moment marks the beginning of the end of the play, and the small boy never materialises on stage; he is left hanging in the world, like an unfulfilled hope.

Kott suggests that it is the fall of worlds that is central to both *King Lear* and *Endgame*. He says, "In both Shakespearian and Beckettian *Endgames* it is the modern world that fell; the renaissance world and ours."<sup>200</sup> The plays are fables for the downfall of civilisations, for the destruction of nature, for an apocalypse caused by human pollution. At one point, Hamm drifts into a story about an old friend,

I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter – and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! [*Pause.*] He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. [*Pause.*] He alone had been spared. [*Pause.*] Forgotten. [*Pause.*] It appears the case is...was not so...so unusual.<sup>201</sup>

This is the nightmare of the modern world, the nightmare of ecological devastation. In a way, this is also the nightmare of Lear himself, as expressed in Brook's production. The world around him collapses into chaos and ruin, while he goes mad. Hamm's comment that such a case is not unusual makes it clear that in the modern world, we are all Lear, faced with a world that cannot stand on its own, with the burden of personal subjectivity. The great drama critic Kenneth Tynan

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<sup>198</sup> Beckett 118.

<sup>199</sup> Beckett 131.

<sup>200</sup> Kott 128.

<sup>201</sup> Beckett 113.

wrote in his review of Brook's production that "the leading figures enact their roles on a gradually denuded stage that resembles, at the end, a desert graveyard of unpeopled planet."<sup>202</sup>

Tynan appropriately identifies the apocalyptic imagery of Brook's world, the primary thread connecting Brook's production with Beckett's play. Only in using this imagery, in providing an apocalyptic image of the world, did *King Lear* come alive for Brook, and the critical response reveals that the aesthetics of apocalypse gave the play a new life on stage.

At the outset of the performance, Brook left the house lights up. This forced the audience to see itself, and allowed the actors to see the audience. In his study of the play in performance, Marvin Rosenberg says this choice "emphasized the meaninglessness of the *Lear* world."<sup>203</sup> He continues, "There was no comfort in this world, not even a curtain to shut the actors off."<sup>204</sup> Certainly, a comfortless world is not one without meaning. The very fact of its comfortlessness tells us something of the world in which the performance took place. The audience was lit, the actors were lit; there was a link between the world on the stage and the world of the audience. The divide between the real world and the play world manifested itself only when the actors began, but even then the boundaries remained blurred. Brook chose to cut the exposition regarding Edmund's illegitimate status, beginning instead with Lear's abdication. The house lights remained on, implying that the audience was complicit in Lear's actions, an active part of the scene rather than passive performers. This is one aspect of environmental theatre that Brook's experiments with space engaged. The environment of this *King Lear* was intended to directly confront and engage the audience, to draw them into the production. Brook says, "Certain elements, such as an invigorating environment, might arouse the audience to a certain

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<sup>202</sup> Kenneth Tynan, "A World Without Gods or Hope," rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *The Observer* (16 Dec. 1962) np.

<sup>203</sup> Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972) 34.

<sup>204</sup> Rosenberg 34.

degree, impinge upon their distractedness and passivity.”<sup>205</sup> The opening of this performance provided just such an environment. This strategy prevents a level of critical distancing, it does not allow the audience to sit back and observe the action in a detached way. The audience must engage in the production, must *experience* it, and become a part of performance ecosystem.

Most of the reviewers of this production understood the stark empty stage as a primitive world, a traditional take on *King Lear*. Barker described “a general feeling of primitive bareness.”<sup>206</sup> T.C. Worsley’s review took this general sense further, claiming the production was set in “the dawn of time, and that dawn was not roseate and pretty, but violent, ugly, brutish.”<sup>207</sup> Finally, J.C. Trewin made the most specific reference, saying that Paul Scofield’s Lear was “a figure from a primeval world – almost, it might be, a rusting Iron Age.”<sup>208</sup> Brook was aiming for a less specified time period than what these reviewers sensed, a world of the imagination that never really existed. He wrote that setting the play in a primitive world “lose[s] the essential cruelty, which is the cruelty of turning a man outdoors. The people indoors feel the difference between the elements and the man-made solid world from which Lear is expelled.”<sup>209</sup> In other words, a primitive, pagan king would not be uncomfortable outdoors, he would be accustomed to the harshness of survival in the natural world. It was necessary for this world to be different, for there to be the distinct sense of comfort in the King’s abode, and for the world outside to be harsh and dangerous. In overturning the convention of setting the play in a primitive world, Brook also removed the elements of pastoralism that may be attributable to the play.

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<sup>205</sup> Peter Brook, “Any Event Stems from Combustion: Actors, Audiences, and Theatrical Energy,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 8.30 (May 1992) 108.

<sup>206</sup> Felix Barker, “A Straightforward Text Book Lear,” rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *London Evening News* (7 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>207</sup> T.C. Worsley, “King Lear,” rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *The Financial Times* (7 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>208</sup> J.C. Trewin, “Combined Power of Brook and Scofield,” rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *Birmingham Post* (7 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>209</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 89.

By using a timeless setting, by drawing on a Beckettian world-picture, Brook averted any sense of catharsis in the play. This was a departure from more traditional stagings, but also a departure from the play itself in some ways. Brook felt that he needed to create a play-world without catharsis in order to make it fit his view of the world in 1962. In her study of pastoral elements in Shakespeare's tragedies, Susan Snyder writes,

In its savage way the heath is not totally unlike comedy's green world. Its wild elementalism shows up the flatteries and the veiled verbal cruelties of Lear's, Goneril's, and Gloucester's castles. It provides a new point of view: Edgar as Poor Tom is for most purposes a new character who offers to Lear the image he requires of natural man ("the thing itself") and to both Lear and Gloucester the oblique tutelage of destitution and madness. In *Lear* no less than in *As You Like It*, the natural setting is a place where desires and needs can be acted out.<sup>210</sup>

This is not an unproblematic reading of the play. First, Lear descends into madness in the wilderness of the heath, and any lessons he may learn from Poor Tom do not hold. His desire, when he awakens from his insanity is not to return to the throne and lead his country back from the devastation and division he has caused, but rather to remain apart from civilisation with his beloved daughter Cordelia:

Come, let's away to prison;  
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage.  
When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down  
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
Talk of court news. (5.3.8-14)<sup>211</sup>

He does not want to return to court, and he considers those who deal in the news of court "poor rogues." This is Lear's dream of a pastoral retreat, which he has not had the luxury of experiencing. His sojourn in the wilderness was not a means to psychic renewal, and while his madness abates, it is not from the effects of nature, but from his daughter's tears. In Brook's

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<sup>210</sup> Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 143.

<sup>211</sup> All references are to William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R.A. Foakes, third Arden Series (London: Thomson Learning, 1997).

*King Lear*, there is only wildness, no possibility is left for the renewal of the green world.

Perhaps this is a departure from the Shakespearean original, and Brook certainly cut the text liberally, but some critics read too much pastoral into the tragedy.

Another aspect of the pastoral mode identified by critics is the symbolic life and death cycle of the protagonist. Nancy Lindheim argues,

One of the standard conventions of pastoral elegy is the comparison between the protagonist's death and the rebirth cycle of vegetative nature, a comparison which points to man's alienation from a nature that he is otherwise harmoniously part of and which formulates the anguish and tension that the final consolation of the elegy then overcomes.<sup>212</sup>

There is no comparison between Lear's death and natural rebirth at the end of the play, and no sense that the alienation could be overcome. Scofield died "staring vacantly into the vast empty universe that had left him such a ruin."<sup>213</sup> There would be no comparison between this Lear's death and natural rebirth because there would be no natural rebirth, the world was utterly and unequivocally void. Brook chose to highlight "man's alienation from...nature" by not primitivising the play. In this world, neither modern nor ancient, the king's death does not bring renewal and rebirth, the chaos remains. By making the banishment of Lear to the outdoors an act of cruelty, Brook emphasised that in this world, the natural retreat was not a place of renewal and rebirth. Jane Kingsley-Smith claims, "Shakespearean pastoral begins with the premise that the natural world, however unfamiliar or savage, is *kinder* than the society left behind."<sup>214</sup> In Brook's *King Lear*, it was a harsh world that drove the king mad and left the world in tatters. I wonder if it was a sense of pastoral that made the anonymous reviewer from the *Liverpool Daily*

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<sup>212</sup> Nancy R. Lindheim, "King Lear as Pastoral Tragedy," *Some Facets of King Lear: essays in prismatic criticism*, eds. Rosalie L. Colie and F.T. Flahiff (London: Heinemann, 1974) 182.

<sup>213</sup> Nightingale, "Some Recent Productions" 243.

<sup>214</sup> Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Shakespeare's Drama of Exile* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 109.

*Post* describe the set thus: “The stage is warm with rich autumn tints of the kind that blazed from the Cotswold countryside as I drove to Stratford yesterday.”<sup>215</sup>

There were numerous specific moments in this production that warrant attention as elements of the world that contribute to the ecopoetics of this *King Lear*, and with their own ecological resonances. The first is the scene titled “Hunting.” In the rehearsal process, Brook and the company named certain sections of the play, and the prompt book reveals that this scene encompassed 1.3 and 1.4 in the text.<sup>216</sup> No staged hunting occurred, but rather the return of Lear and his knights from their hunt to the home of Goneril (Irene Worth). The prompt book calls for the sound of horses to signal their arrival. Brook used few technical elements in the show, no music or environmental noises but the horses and some strange synthesized sounds during the storm, so this moment is clearly important. With the stage remaining mostly bare, and only a few scenographic elements to indicate place, Brook used the sound cues to designate shifts in location. More than just a device to suggest a scene change, however, the sound of horses provided the production with an element of the more-than-human world. Marowitz’s rehearsal diary describes the development of this scene saying, “Morning devoted to the Hunting Scene; to creating the reality of Lear’s knights; the dusty outdoors, the feel of hard saddle-leather, and hunters returning after a long, sweaty ride.”<sup>217</sup> This is the creation of an illusion – the staged image of hunters who have not been hunting – not in an effort to mirror reality, but deriving from the reality of experience.

As part of the Hunting Scene, Brook incorporated an extratextual bit of stage business that provided justification for Goneril’s expulsion of her father. Impetuously demanding his

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<sup>215</sup> Anon., “Scofield’s Triumphant First Lear,” rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *Liverpool Daily Post* (7 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>216</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, Prompt Book for *King Lear*, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon (opening 6 Nov. 1962), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

<sup>217</sup> Marowitz 14.

dinner, Scofield's Lear flipped over his table as he cursed his daughter saying, "Darkness and devils!" (1.4.243). The company of knights, taking their cue from the king, erupted in a gleefully destructive riot that left the stage a chaotic mess (see appendix, figure two). Again, assistant director Marowitz's observations help reconstruct the moment:

As Lear overturned the table, the stage exploded and sent shrapnel flying in a dozen different directions. Tankards whizzed through the air hitting actors and ricocheting into the laps of the stage-managers below; set pieces were smashed over up-ended bits of furniture and a chandelier above the rehearsal stage was splintered into a thousand pieces which came raining down on the full company.<sup>218</sup>

While Brook took pains to maintain a dichotomy between the indoor and outdoor worlds, reinforcing the cruelty of Lear's expulsion, this is an interesting moment in which the chaos and devastation comes inside early in the play. It is an imposition on the text, but one that reveals the pervasiveness of the world's decay: it is not just outdoors, in the storm, that chaos prevails, but even the more comfortable, indoor, civil world has devolved.

During the storm scene, the most enduring imagery of apocalypse occurred because of some of the most revolutionary choices Brook made in the production. The storm began as Lear growled out the vow that his revenges "shall be / The terrors of the earth!" (2.2.470-471). At this moment, three triangular sheets of rusted iron descended from the fly-space over the stage. Mounted on small motors that shook and vibrated the metal sheets, they created a grating thunder sound that was accompanied at points by electronically synthesised sound effects. On the one hand, the use of Lear's vow as the storm cue could be seen as a problematic alteration of the original text. In a rare moment of specified stage business, the Folio text of the play calls for the sound of "storm and tempest" after the word "weeping" two lines later (2.2.472s.d.). This stage direction is absent from the Quarto text. Brook's decision to move the cue could signify that Lear's curses, many of which are commands to the natural world to obey him and his will, do

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<sup>218</sup> Marowitz 14-15.

control nature in some way. However, he reaps no benefit from the storm, and the daughters whom he desires nature to punish survive the storm unscathed. Alan Brien's review of the production refutes this reading somewhat, saying of Scofield's portrayal of Lear that "his invocations to the gods are empty prayers only half-remembered from some Druid Sunday school in Camelot."<sup>219</sup> Scofield's Lear was not the type of king who truly believed his curses, or perhaps even in the gods of nature at all. Rather, it seems his sin was not expecting nature to obey his whims, but that he had forgotten nature altogether. This notion will become crucial in Brook's later film version of the play (discussed in chapter four).

At the outset of the storm, not only was there a distinct set change, with the appearance of the three triangular thunder sheets, but there was also an abrupt alteration in the style of performance. Again, the words of Brook's assistant evoke the stage image:

No sooner does the three-slatted symbol appear than the acting becomes starkly non-naturalistic. The shape of the mime between Kent and the Gentleman has been virtually choreographed – mainly by the actors themselves – and the scene exists as a clear heightening of the action which paves the way for Lear's entry on the heath. Worked out in precisely the same detail is the correspondence between Lear's speeches and the electric storm; each orchestrated with the other so that the thunder serves as an accompaniment to the poetry rather than a dumb, relentless opposition. Scofield uses "Blow winds and crack your cheeks" as a sound weapon against the din of the thunder rather than a conventional cosmic challenge. This is an effective opening gambit, as it immediately establishes the combat between man and the elements.<sup>220</sup>

There are several elements of the opening of the storm that must be addressed, but the introduction of a non-naturalistic acting style ties the entire storm episode to the nature-art dialectic that is the crux of ecopoetics. The actors, according to Marowitz, choreographed their mime. Nevertheless, for it to read to the audience that they were miming being out in a storm, the mime must have been based at least partially on the same sort of actions real people take

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<sup>219</sup> Alan Brien, "Going Against Nature," rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *The Sunday Telegraph* (11 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>220</sup> Marowitz 13-14.



when they are trapped outside in a real storm. In fact, the prompt-book even calls for Kent and the Gentleman to “crouch together [under] hanging out branches of a sheltering tree.”<sup>221</sup> Of course, no stage properties except for the metal slabs were introduced into the scene, so this shows how far the company took their imaginative experience. While it may have been “non-naturalistic” for the actors to interact with stage properties that did not exist, wind that was not blowing, and rain that was not falling, they had to base their actions on the same actions they would have made if all these things were occurring. In a way, the storm rendered the world imperceptible to the audience in terms of their standard senses, it was only by watching the experiential mime of the actors that spectators could understand that they were in a storm.

It is a paradox of all performance, but stage theatre especially, that so much artifice goes into creating a “realistic” appearance. For example, the rusted metal sheets that shook during the storm were not simply “left for weeks to go rusty in the rain.”<sup>222</sup> Rather, according to Charles Marowitz, the skilled artists of the RSC properties department added texture and paint to the natural corrosion in order to make the slabs look “just ginger enough to have an artistic hue and just worn enough to look genuinely rotten.”<sup>223</sup> During one of the early rehearsals with these sheets, one of the motors shook the iron slab from its moorings and it crashed to the stage near where Brook and some of the technical crew were standing.<sup>224</sup> Marowitz says, “The actors have been wary of the sheets ever since, and the storm scenes have gained an element of apprehension which is all to the good.”<sup>225</sup> So it took a technical accident to create the sense of fear and apprehension in the storm, and the skill of artists to make the rusted metal sheets appear “genuinely rotten.” It seems as if stage performance must occur in the place where art and nature

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<sup>221</sup> Brook, Prompt-Book, *King Lear*.

<sup>222</sup> Moffitt 91, quoted above in Brook’s description of the set.

<sup>223</sup> Marowitz 13.

<sup>224</sup> Marowitz 13; J.C. Trewin, *Peter Brook: A Biography* (London: Macdonald, 1971) 127.

<sup>225</sup> Marowitz 13.

interact. After all, it took the bodies of the actors (natural) acting and reacting in choreographed movements (art) to create a sense of the storm's affect on the human characters. It took the combined work of artists and nature to make the look of the metal slabs fit the aesthetic of the play. It also required the accidental near-death experience of several crew members to provide the storm with a sense of danger and fear that Brook felt necessary in this scene: "One real element that emerges from the plot is the notion of nature as something hostile, dangerous, against which man has to battle."<sup>226</sup> The storm was another part of the apocalyptic vision of Brook, one that was not lost on reviewer J.C. Trewin, who described the initial rumble of thunder as "the first prelude to a fearful doomsday."<sup>227</sup> Considering the death and destruction that dominate the remainder of the play, and Tynan's aforementioned description of the production's end as a "graveyard of unpeopled planet,"<sup>228</sup> Trewin's description is apt.

The storm in this production left the world in chaos, and Brook's Kott-/Beckett-inspired view of the play as a proto-grotesque prevented any rebirth and renewal in the world. Scofield's Lear never came onstage wearing a crown of flowers picked from a hedgerow or furrow. Rather, his madness was indicated by a few twigs and weeds stuck in his tousled hair. If this Lear reconnected with nature in any way, it was with a ruined and devastated nature. It is interesting, then, that several reviewers described him in distinctly natural terms. One called him "a craggy rock, pitted deep by the elements and fortune."<sup>229</sup> In his review for *The Stage*, Edmund Gardner took this imagery further, describing Scofield's Lear as "a gnarled oak who might have been spawned from the very earth he rules."<sup>230</sup> Superficially, these comments may seem incongruous

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<sup>226</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 204.

<sup>227</sup> J.C. Trewin, "Combined Power" np.

<sup>228</sup> Tynan np, quoted as description of Brook's world above.

<sup>229</sup> N.K.W., "Paul Scofield Scores in Tremendous Role of Lear," rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (7 Nov. 1962) np.

<sup>230</sup> Edmund Gardner, "Paul Scofield is a Towering Lear," rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *The Stage* (8 Nov. 1962) np.

with my reading of Brook's production. However, the key to Brook's conception for Scofield's Lear was blindness (see appendix, figure three).<sup>231</sup> Lear cannot see his responsibility for his own suffering, he cannot see that his anthropocentric attitude in terms of controlling nature divided him from the environment. The environmental resonances that the above reviewers sensed in Lear's character make his inability to reconnect with the natural world all the more poignant. Brook's refusal to set the play in a distinct time makes a reading of Lear's character problematic because it is impossible to determine how this version of the king could interact with nature in cultural-historical terms. Like these reviewers, we are forced to put something of ourselves into this character, to understand him in terms of our own identity. This Lear has lost touch with the world around him, and not even his sojourn in the stormy heath can renew what has been lost.

Brook made the importance of blindness all the more evident through the figure of Gloucester (Alan Webb). The production drew attention to the blinding of Gloucester in two ways: first by making it the final action before the interval, and second by raising the house lights for the violent moment. As at the beginning of the play, the use of the house lights made the audience part of the scene and made their reactions to Gloucester's blinding important. It forced the audience to examine their own sensibilities and blurred the boundary between the real world and the stage world. Brook's rationale for highlighting this moment of the play was to jar the audience, to give them something unexpected. "It is very hard to interfere with a spectator's stock reactions," he says, concluding that using the house lights "[made] the audience take stock of the scene before being engulfed in automatic applause."<sup>232</sup> Brook problematises audience applause here, a topic discussed in relation to Kershaw's *Theatre Ecology* in chapter one above. His point was to fuel the audience's imagination, to force a different response from spectators, a

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<sup>231</sup> Marowitz 6; Trewin, *Peter Brook* 128.

<sup>232</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 82.

response more true to their experience of the moment than standard applause. In other words, to allow a different sort of energy into the theatre, to prevent the environment of this production from becoming what Kershaw terms a “closed system.” To make the moment even more grotesque, Brook cut the two servants who take pity on Gloucester. Thus, the interval began with Gloucester blindly trying to make his way off-stage while stage-hands cleared the properties around him. There was no other cue for the audience to take its break, making it impossible for them to feel any sense of relief after this moment of heightened emotions and physical violence. This contributed to the prevention of catharsis that Brook sought, eliminating any sense of comfort and kindness from the world. It was as though the storm washed away not only Lear’s sanity, but also any remaining humaneness in the world.

Gloucester’s blindness becomes even more grotesque and absurd as he is led by his son Edgar (disguised as Poor Tom, played by Brian Murray) to Dover. The two actors performed an elaborate mime of approaching the cliff, with Edgar leading and Gloucester following. Edgar held his walking stick at an angle to give his blind father the impression of climbing, then used it as a guardrail to keep the old man away from the cliff’s “edge.” Alexander Leggatt says, “Gloucester put out a foot, feeling sideways, lost his balance, and clung to the stick. In the neutral space that was the set we *could* have been at Dover Cliff; as the mime created it for us, we almost felt that we were.”<sup>233</sup> Of course, all this action took place on the Royal Shakespeare Theatre’s bare, platform stage, making the physicality of the mime all the more important. Edgar created the world in a sensual way for his father to experience, and this carried over to the audience’s experience at least for Leggatt. This mime, in the production, is the prelude to the description of the cliff that Edgar sketches in:

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<sup>233</sup> Alexander Leggatt, *King Lear*, Shakespeare in Performance Series (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991) 37 (original emphasis).

Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand still: how fearful  
 And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low.  
 The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
 Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half-way down  
 Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade;  
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
 The fisherman that walk upon the beach  
 Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring barque  
 Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy  
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge  
 That on th'unnumbered idle pebble chafes,  
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,  
 Lest me brain turn and the deficient sight  
 Topple down headlong. (4.6.11-24)

This is Edgar's personal moment of world-creation, his own ecopoetics. This moment may have been directly inspired by Kott, who said, "The *mime* creates a scenic area: the top and bottom of the cliff, the precipice. Shakespeare makes use of all the means of anti-illusionist theatre in order to create a most realistic and concrete landscape."<sup>234</sup> Of course, this is an experiential moment in the production, not merely described with Edgar's words, but sensed both by the characters involved in the mime and the audience viewing it.

Edgar's world-making is a critical moment. Shakespeare clearly used such imaginatively described landscapes to set scenes in his plays, but nowhere is the poetic process so developed and so exactly detailed. However, the advances of stage technology during the intervening 400 years from Shakespeare's time to ours make it possible to actually depict this physical location on stage, to say nothing of film. Of course, it would not work to have Edgar lead his father to the top of Dover Cliff: the old man's suicide attempt must fail. However, locating this scene at or near the iconic white-chalk cliffs is certainly possible. Just as modern theatre practitioners can raise and lower stage lights to indicate day and night, so can they change backdrops and use sound cues to assist in creating the world. Brook chose to simply use the

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<sup>234</sup> Kott 114 (my emphasis).

actors' bodies, a walking stick, and Edgar's words on a bare stage. It was this type of imaginative world-creation that created the best response from the audience. He used the same sort of non-naturalistic acting style that Stanley Wells argues was necessary and enhanced by the bare stage of Shakespeare's theatre.<sup>235</sup> Snyder argues that the "wild exuberance" of Edgar's world-creation "gives an odd exhilaration to the scene at Dover, where Edgar as beggar creates the whole dizzy prospect that is not here from the cliff where they are not standing."<sup>236</sup> Her double negative reveals, of course that we are in the theatre, not at Dover, but also that in the imaginary world of the play we do not need to be at Dover. In fact, the one place that Edgar and Gloucester *cannot* be is the top of any cliff. The exhilaration Snyder speaks of occurs for the audience, rather than for the characters on stage. It is an example of the experience of the natural world being mirrored on stage to create an effect through non-realistic methods. Art is creating nature, but is also created by nature.

John Reibetanz notes, "The various nebulous locations reinforce our sense of the self-contained yet all-encompassing nature of the *Lear* world."<sup>237</sup> Nature is a subject in the play, a topic of conversation and a part of the action. Nature is also, of course, precedent to the play, the actual physical reality without which the environment of the play-world could never exist. In his study of Shakespeare's plays on film, Anthony Davies argues, "The action on the theatre stage is encapsulated within an 'aesthetic microcosm,' the main purpose of which is to make a spatial distinction between art and nature."<sup>238</sup> In many traditional forms of theatre, this may very well be the case, but it seems clear that Brook's *King Lear* does not maintain any distinction between

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<sup>235</sup> Stanley Wells, "Introduction," *King Lear* by William Shakespeare, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 35.

<sup>236</sup> Snyder 151.

<sup>237</sup> John Reibetanz, *The Lear World: A study of King Lear in its dramatic context* (London: Heinemann, 1977) 15.

<sup>238</sup> Anthony Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's Play: the Adaptations of Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Peter Brook and Akira Kurosawa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 5.

nature and art. In fact, it seems more likely that Brook's spatial experiments, his blurring of the distinction between stage-world and audience, and his use of an apocalyptic world recognisable to the audience actually connected the aesthetic microcosm of the stage with the natural macrocosm of the world. This is the point of eco-drama, those plays written with specifically ecological goals in mind, and Brook's production prefigured a great deal of work on space and place in the theatre, on audience-actor interaction, and on audience reaction that came later in the 1960s.

The production did not receive the same response on its tour of the world that it did in Stratford. Between 1962 and 1964, *King Lear* toured Europe as far as Moscow, and the United States. Throughout Europe, the contextualisation of the play in its modern environment made sense to audiences. Brook identifies three aspects of the European audiences that assisted with their understanding of the production: "a love of the play itself, real hunger for a contact with foreigners and, above all, an *experience* of life in Europe in the last years that enabled them to come directly to the play's painful themes."<sup>239</sup> The life that Brook refers to as being exclusively experienced by Europeans is, of course, the proximity to the front lines of the Cold War. Thus the audience was more in tune not only with the play itself, but with the specific take on the play that Brook envisioned and the company realised on stage. The same response was impossible to achieve during the American tour. While most of the reviews of the production in America were still largely positive, the play jarred with its context in a way that stifled the experience of the performance rather than engaging the audience's imagination. Of the New York City residency Brook said,

Eventually, our impresario took the play to the Lincoln Centre in New York – a giant auditorium where the acoustics were bad and the audience resented its poor contact with the stage. We were put in this vast theatre for economic reasons: a simple illustration of

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<sup>239</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 25 (my emphasis).

how a closed circle of cause and effect is produced, so that the wrong audience or the wrong place or both conjure from the actors their coarsest work.<sup>240</sup>

Here is the ecology of the theatre at work: the environment, the audience, the performers, they are all locked into an interactive system which is not reliant on harmonious balance, but must have an adequate supply of energy in order to function effectively. Taken out of its European context and placed in a cavernous theatre with little audience-performance interaction, the production did not achieve the same imaginative levels that were so important to Brook. In this performance, the theatre became a closed system, largely because of the performance space itself and the failure of energy to flow through the theatre.

Benedict Nightingale writes of the production, “If helpless characters agonizedly talk of the gods on a bleak, airy stage, that makes them look smaller than life – Brook’s solution – the audience is implicitly invited to speculate about the nature of *Lear*’s universe.”<sup>241</sup> This is precisely what I have argued in this chapter, that Brook’s clearing of the stage, that his post-apocalyptic vision, inspired an imaginative response from the audience. The world of this *Lear* connected the audience’s perception of the world on stage to the world outdoors. Rather than allow the production to end with catharsis and rebirth, Brook added a final foreboding element to force the performance to continue to resonate beyond the theatre’s walls. Assistant director Charles Marowitz describes the effect:

I suggested that, instead of the silence and repose which follows the last couplet, it might be disturbing to suggest that another storm – the greater storm – was on the way...Brook seconded the idea, but instead of an overpowering storm, preferred a faint, dull rumbling which would suggest something more ominous and less explicit.<sup>242</sup>

This suggested that the “greater storm” would occur outside the world of *Lear* and in the world of the audience. Such a sense was not lost on reviewer Harold Hobson, who wrote,

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<sup>240</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 26.

<sup>241</sup> Nightingale, “Some Recent Productions” 230.

<sup>242</sup> Marowitz 15.



The dark and terrible import of Mr. Brook's production, which is intensified by the limitation of its scale, is that man is being watched, and that his presumption will not be forgiven. The meek shall inherit the earth only if an earth is left them to inherit. Another Cuba will not end in general handshake.<sup>243</sup>

In this sense, the production still holds relevance for the world of today. We may not be facing a nuclear catastrophe, but the environmental degradation of the world today is no less threatening to the fate of the human species. The imaginative experience of the world Brook's production asserted was also the main impetus behind the work of Rachel Carson and Samuel Beckett. Whether these writers intend to or not, they are all engaged in the work of ecopoetics, the making of their own worlds, and it is in understanding the ecology of these worlds that we can better understand our own.

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<sup>243</sup> Harold Hobson, "A vengeful universe," rev. of *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, *The Sunday Times* (11 Nov. 1962) np.

## Chapter 4:

### Peter Brook's *King Lear* in Film

After *King Lear*, Brook's career continued with a variety of productions exploring theatrical space. Simultaneously, he grew more overtly political in his choice of productions. Brook was far too prolific for it to be possible here to chronicle all of his work from 1962 to 1968, but it is important to examine several of his more important productions in order to understand the context for his book *The Empty Space*. Immediately after *Lear*, Brook directed *The Physicists* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt.<sup>244</sup> The play is a black comedy set in an insane asylum. The main theme of the play is the destructive power of modern science: one physicist (Möbius) has discovered a new theory that has devastating potential, and gets himself locked in the asylum to protect his secret. The other two physicists (Newton and Einstein) are trying to get the secret out of him to return it to their respective governments. It is a comedy, but one with serious implications. At the heart of the play is the deeply embedded fear of nuclear apocalypse that so dominated the Cold War era and had such influence over Brook's work on the stage production of *King Lear*. This production is considered minor in the arc of his career, evidenced by the lack of critical attention it is paid. Nevertheless, it reveals how influential apocalyptic rhetoric was at the time, and that it clearly affected Brook. The production also set the stage for the "Theatre of Cruelty" season<sup>245</sup> and the *Marat/Sade*.<sup>246</sup> Both of these later performances furthered Brook's experiments in theatrical space and audience interaction.

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<sup>244</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, *The Physicists*, Aldwych Theatre, London, opening 9 Jan. 1963; UK national tour opening 14 May 1963.

<sup>245</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, various productions, LAMDA Theatre Club, London, opening 12 Jan. 1964.

<sup>246</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, *Marat/Sade*, Aldwych Theatre, London, opening 20 Aug. 1964; Martin Beck Theatre, New York, opening 27 Dec. 1965.

Only a year after the publication of *The Empty Space* (discussed above in chapter two), Brook began filming *King Lear*. Between the two events, he directed two major theatrical productions: Seneca's *Oedipus* at the National Theatre, after a translation by Ted Hughes, and a loose adaptation of *The Tempest* at the Roundhouse. Both are important as manifestations of his theoretical ideas in *The Empty Space*, and as context for his approach to the film of *King Lear*, however, I save my analysis of the Roundhouse production for chapter six. These two productions also continue to demonstrate the ecopoetics that I have identified in Brook's work. My examination in this chapter highlights an intensifying engagement with performance environments in the wake of *The Empty Space*. Brook's work after this book demonstrates meetings of performance and environment that reach their epitome in his filmed adaptation of *King Lear* which is the focus of this chapter.

*Oedipus* was Brook's first fully-staged attempt to create a ritualised theatrical experience. His goal, according to his theatrical biographers Hunt and Reeves, was to get "the audience to treat *Oedipus* as one possible vehicle to answer the need for a true contact with a sacred invisibility (God?) through the theatre."<sup>247</sup> He threw out the original text translation, written by radio producer David Anthony Turner, and commissioned poet Ted Hughes to rewrite the script. Brook's insistence on the mythic importance of the play led him directly to Hughes, whose interests in myth were well-demonstrated through his poetry and his education in Classical literature. Hughes's burgeoning interest in the environmental movement was underdeveloped at the time. It would be convenient to suggest that Hughes's own ecopoetics influenced Brook, but there is unfortunately no evidence to suggest that this is the case. Kustow's biography of Brook does suggest that the two had a very close and mutually enriching partnership. He writes that they "engaged intuitively and deeply. Brook was seeking to renew the powers of theatre in

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<sup>247</sup> Hunt and Reeves 131.

ancient traditions and sources. Hughes was seeking to plant his personal experience and his country's psyche and language in myth and legend."<sup>248</sup> Nevertheless, it was aesthetic qualities present in Hughes's poetry that appealed to Brook, specifically his "brutal, hard-wrought immediacy,"<sup>249</sup> rather than his environmental notions. The key to understanding *Oedipus* is in the importance of ritual experience to both theatrical and environmental ideology, especially in relation to notions of the holy and the immediate theatre that Brook established and explored in *The Empty Space*.

After an extremely long and experimental rehearsal process during which the actors focused on building themselves into a unit, crucial to a play so heavily reliant on a Chorus, the production opened at the home of the National Theatre Company, the Old Vic. Brook intermingled the actors who made up the Chorus with the audience. This created a stereo sound effect and removed the boundaries between performance and audience that would normally have been created by the proscenium-style theatre space. This was an experiment in spatial form that Schechner's environmental theatre would also play with, and it began for Brook in the RSC *King Lear* and would go further in his Roundhouse production of *The Tempest*. Much of Brook's theoretical work in *The Empty Space* is tied up with a search for community, a reconnection between the performance on stage and the audience in the seats. The ritualisation of the theatrical experience, allowing the audience to obtain a sense of coming together for a communal experience (phenomenologically understood as an event), is one strategy for attaining this reconnection. It is also a strategy for creating a sense of place within the theatre. Casey, in relation to the gathering of individuals in place, says, "By 'gathering' I do not mean merely amassing. To gather placewise is to have a peculiar hold on what is presented (as well as

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<sup>248</sup> Michael Kustow, *Peter Brook: a Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005) 206-207.

<sup>249</sup> Kustow 173.

represented) in a given place. Not just the contents but the very mode of containment is held by a place.”<sup>250</sup> The theatrical audience, while not necessarily knowing exactly what it is about to see on stage, certainly understands the reason for its gathering, but does not necessarily grasp the importance of this coming together. Ritualising the performance experience, bringing the performers into the audience and adding the physical presence of actors within the audience, can provide the necessary “hold” for the audience on the place in which they have gathered.

This communal, ritualised gathering is akin to the call to worship, but while the theatrical experience may be similar to the religious ritual it is not exactly analogous to it. In *The Empty Space*, Brook argues that the holy theatre is one way to avoid the traps of the deadly theatre, but he does not infuse theatre with an overtly religious significance. Northrop Frye, in a passage focusing on *The Tempest*, elucidates the ways religious rituals and theatre are different:

Ritual acts based on what is loosely called sympathetic magic, such as pouring water on the ground as a rain charm, resemble drama in being a sequence of significant acts, but are not otherwise dramatic. Such acts are normally accompanied by a story or myth which establishes an interrelated significance among them. Literature, in the form of drama, appears when the myth encloses and contains the ritual. This changes the agents of the ritual into the actors of the myth. The myth sets up a powerful pull away from the magic: the ritual acts are now performed for the sake of representing the myth rather than primarily for affecting the order of nature. In other words, drama is born in the renunciation of magic, and in *The Tempest* and elsewhere it remembers its inheritance.<sup>251</sup>

So in ritual, the act itself is important, whereas in theatre the act is in service to the dramatic story (“myth”). Nevertheless, the ritual origins of theatre, while now focused on the retelling of the myth rather than on engaging the natural world, still originate with the ritual acts themselves. Reconnecting to the ritual origins of theatre and regaining the sense of coming together in place for the audience can contribute to an ecological sense of the theatre. These efforts make up the ecopoetics of Brook’s production of *Oedipus*.

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<sup>250</sup> Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place” 25.

<sup>251</sup> Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective* 59.

Theatre is an artform that contains other artforms: architecture, painting, music (both instrumental and vocal), dance and movement, sculpture, as well as the specifically theatrical arts of elocution, lighting, and choreography (a combination of painting and sculpture with live human bodies). As such it cannot be reduced to simply a visual art, or an oral art, because it encompasses and incorporates both and is necessarily predicated by the gathering of an audience. In *The Empty Space*, Brook claims, “The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience. This is more than a truism: in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation.”<sup>252</sup> A play environs its characters, and is itself environed by the playhouse, which also includes the audience. The importance of the ritual of theatre-going, if emphasised by a production for its spectators, leads to the realisation not only of the environing of the performance worlds and the performance place, but the communisation of the event itself, and hence the production of place within the theatrical space. Again, an audience is always made up of individuals, but individual responses will always affect audience engagement as a whole. The environing of the theatre building, the set, even the placement of actors can create a world in which the audience is encouraged to understand itself as a community.

Brook provided the ultimate metaphor for the environing “place” of theatre on stage in *Oedipus*. The set consisted of a large box that opened to reveal nothing in it. Hunt and Reeves, who not only wrote a theatrical biography of Brook but also worked with him on several productions, call this set “the ultimate riddle, the Chinese box, the elusive solution – something that would concretely express the idea that there was no external answer to the basic questions.”<sup>253</sup> Their description actually skews the meaning of the Chinese box (it is actually a multi-layered box that always reveals another box inside not emptiness) and obscures the

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<sup>252</sup> Brook, *The Empty Space* 154.

<sup>253</sup> Hunt and Reeves 122.

connection between setting and meaning that Brook elucidated in *The Empty Space*. It is only in emptying the space that it could be filled with the theatrical event. The empty stage is the ultimate environment for the ecopoetic creative process: an empty space devoid of meaning onto which the importance of the story can be inscribed through the ritual of the theatrical event. The empty box is a truly theatrical space, an iconic, emblematic, and empty surrounding filled with the theatrical event. This is a concept that Brook would carry further in his famous *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1970. The well-known “white box” production is outside the scope of this thesis, but it would be a very interesting subject for an ecopoetic analysis.

The closing moments of *Oedipus* require some further examination in relation to the ritualistic theatre and its ecological resonances. Hughes stated that his goal for the play, in concert with Brook's, was to “release whatever inner power this story, in its plainest, bluntest form, still has, and to unearth, if we could, the ritual possibilities within” the play.<sup>254</sup> The ritualisation of the tragedy came to a pinnacle at the end, when Brook chose to stage a satyr-play. Traditionally, Greek tragedies were concluded with such cathartic releases, analogous in some ways to Elizabethan jigs. Satyr-plays took one, usually thematic, element of the tragedy and staged a send-up of it for the audience. Seneca's *Oedipus*, being a Roman play based on Sophocles' original Greek material, would not have ended with this ritualistic cathartic release. In fact, there is not even consensus on whether Seneca's plays were performed at all. Some scholars believe they were rhetorical pieces meant to be spoken aloud but not fully staged.<sup>255</sup> In the Greek theatre, cycles of tragedies were performed as part of a competition, and the satyr-play was designed to link the tragic theatrical event with “the festival held each spring in honour of

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<sup>254</sup> Ted Hughes, “Introduction,” *Seneca's Oedipus* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969) 7-8.

<sup>255</sup> George W.M. Harrison, ed., *Seneca's Performance* (London: Duckworth, 2000).

Dionysus, god of wine, youth and fertility – mythic spirit of energy, violence and action.”<sup>256</sup> So the origins of Seneca’s story, Sophocles’ tragic trilogy, would have been inherently tied to the natural cycle of rebirth embodied in the spring. The reliance of ancient Greek society on agriculture and the importance of the rebirth of nature to farming formed the basis for the necessity of release following a tragic, moralistic story. The same socio-cultural atmosphere did not exist in Seneca’s Rome, nor in Brook’s London.

Despite the anachronism of staging a satyr-play after a Roman tragedy in a modern theatre, Brook chose to use this device to highlight the savage sexuality of the play: accompanied by a Dixie band playing “Yes, We Have No Bananas,” the cast carried out a massive golden phallus and celebrated around it in carnivalesque style. In the printed text, Hughes includes the stage direction, “*The CHORUS celebrate the departure of OEDIPUS with a dance.*”<sup>257</sup> Certainly intended as a cathartic and satirical moment, the inclusion of this ritualized theatrical convention caused more confusion than release. Audiences were unsure of how to respond to this coda to the story, leading Hunt and Reeves to conclude that “the production only seemed to underline the impossibility of making such contact [with a sacred invisibility] now.”<sup>258</sup> More likely, the audience did not understand the importance of lightening the mood after the tragic unfolding of events. Croydon argues,

Attempts at ritual seem less successful when actors and audience share no common ground. In actual fact, ritual has always had a moral, religious, practical, or psychological significance, and has never existed for its own sake. Rites were a need. Spring meant a rebirth of the crops and food, a relief from the darkness of the winter; thus rites often accompanied the change of season. Rites helped primitive people to overcome the mysteries of the universe; their dances and ceremonies were offerings to the mysterious elements, in exchange for survival.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Glynne Wickham, *A History of Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and New York: Phaidon, 1992) 31.

<sup>257</sup> Hughes 55.

<sup>258</sup> Hunt and Reeves 131.

<sup>259</sup> Croydon 203.



In the ecopoetics of this production, Brook made strides toward the creation of place on the stage, partially achieved through ritual. Unlike the original Greek audience for the story, and the Roman audience that may have seen Seneca's adaptation, a modern theatre-going audience has little direct ties to the agricultural process, so the performance of the satyr-play was out of place. Coupled with its inclusion in a play not necessarily accompanied by such codas, this conclusion to the action seemed more an intellectual idea than a true engagement with theatrical ritual.

*Oedipus* was the result of Brook's previously developed theatrical philosophies, and the launching point for further engagement with, and exploration of, them. While deemed a failure in some ways, it was the result of the work Brook created in the mid-1960s, and vestiges of it can be seen in *Orghast*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and many of his other later productions. One important element that Brook brought into the work on *Oedipus* during the rehearsal process was a connection to the primitive that he would explore in subsequent work, including the film of *King Lear*. In his introduction to the printed play-text of *Oedipus*, Hughes argues that the main characters are "only Greek by convention; by nature, they are more primitive than aboriginals."<sup>260</sup> Taking this cue from the text, Brook introduced certain primitive ideas into the preparation process. In an interview with Margaret Croydon, Colin Blakely (Creon) described some vocal exercises during rehearsals:

We connected the speeches to a deliberate type of breathing, not normal – the kind one uses in voice exercises. This idea grew out of our listening to recordings from various primitive tribes. We found that in certain primitive societies they used certain peculiar breath methods and certain noises for ceremonial purposes and for the worshipping of their gods. All of this fits in perfectly with Brook's idea of Theatre as Ritual. We had that to begin with but we didn't want to copy a native ritual; so we made up our own rituals.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Hughes 8.

<sup>261</sup> Colin Blakely, interview with Margaret Croydon, "Exploration of the Ugly: Brook's Work on *Oedipus*," originally published in *Tulane Drama Review*, reprinted in *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, comp. David Williams (London and New York: Methuen, 1988) 127-128.

Blakely is quick to point out that they were not appropriating material from another culture. Likewise, a politically-correct reader would prefer the term “indigenous” to “primitive.” What is interesting about these rituals is that many, if not most, indigenous rituals relate in some way to the natural world, and Brook used them to heighten the impact of his theatrical world.

For his book on ecological phenomenology, David Abram spent time with indigenous tribes around the world. The importance of his experiences with these cultures in terms of my reading of Brook’s work is apparent in the core question of his book:

Western culture, too, has its indigenous origins. If the relative attunement to environing nature exhibited by native cultures is linked to a more primordial, participatory mode of perception, how had Western civilization come to be so exempt from this sensory reciprocity?<sup>262</sup>

This question drives Abram to explore the storytelling rituals of indigenous cultures in his search for a more phenomenological form of experiencing the natural world. For Brook, the rituals he absorbed from indigenous cultures were an attempt to find a more experiential form of theatre. His later work in Africa and Australia would further Brook’s insistence on the significance of primitive rituals to Western drama, but such ideas were already germinating prior to those international experiences, and certainly would appear at moments in *King Lear*. In *The Empty Space*, he argued that the ritual significance of drama was dead in the Western theatre. While *Oedipus* was not the play to revive this lost element, it seemed that it was not dead after all, but slumbering. Brook had to travel the planet to find it and bring it back, but these early works, prior to his forays into indigenous cultures, reveal his preoccupation with such rituals.

Brook shot *King Lear* from January to April of 1969, though it was not released until 1971. This film is considered something of an anomaly within the arc of his career. Most critical texts on the film consider it without the context of Brook’s other work at the time, and

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<sup>262</sup> Abram 27.

the biographical texts on the director set it apart from the productions that immediately preceded and followed it. He was filming other material, but these films were mostly adaptations of stage productions, such as *The Marat/Sade* and *Tell Me Lies* (the filmed version of *US*). Brook makes it clear that this film was very different from these works saying, “We filmed *King Lear* seven or eight years after staging the play and the fascinating challenge was to make the film without hanging on to any of the images that belonged to the stage version.”<sup>263</sup> It is clear, then, that this film, while drawing on much of what Brook began to develop in the 1962 stage production, stands as a separate entity from that earlier adaptation. When Brook’s work is viewed ecopoetically, it becomes apparent that the film was not an anomaly but a natural point connecting his work from the 1960s to the experimental and more intrinsically ecological work that would follow in the 1970s.

The film opens in utter silence, with the camera panning over the faces attending the king to hear his pronouncements. While they are not “frozen,” movement among the group is kept to a minimum, appearing at times like a photograph. The faces are decidedly glum, and no sound breaks the long single shot. Finally, the loud bang of a slamming door stuns the audience out of this enveloping silence, and Scofield begins to speak the opening lines. Silence is a recurrent effect throughout the film. Jones argues that it is “indicative of the nothingness which Brook thereby makes palpable.”<sup>264</sup> Silence is not a tangible physicality, however, it is the lack of sound. It is as if a sensory deprivation chamber exists over the film. It is also unnatural, in that there is always sound in the natural world, even if one needs to focus intensely to hear it: the wind gently rustling the trees, even small insects crawling through the grass. The world is full of sounds, something that Brook removes from the film world. This is not only a departure from

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<sup>263</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 189.

<sup>264</sup> Edward Trostle Jones, *Following Directions: a Study of Peter Brook*, American University Studies, series IV (English Language and Literature), vol. 3 (New York, Berne, and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1985) 151.

realism, but from cinematic convention as well. There is no music, except for the Fool's songs, and little environmental noise outside the storm (which is augmented by the presence of strange electronic sounds). Leggatt notes that this absence "is striking and self-conscious."<sup>265</sup>

The "presence" of silence in the film is indicative of its ecopoetic strategy in representing nature. Brook's producer, Michael Birkett, in a 1969 interview about the production process, said, "Spacing on a sound-track – genuine silence – is not silence but death; it's a dead thing. To make silence work on the screen you have to invent a noise which gives the impression of silence."<sup>266</sup> This is echoed by Brook in his retrospective work *The Shifting Point* when he argues that "it is not reality that exists in the film, but only, and solely, the *impression* of reality."<sup>267</sup> While film may be able to depict more realistic landscapes, and capture actual sounds from nature on its soundtrack, the end result is no more real than portrayals of nature on the stage, or in a painting. Nevertheless, the trick worked: the sound that gives the impression of silence throughout the film convinces viewers that there is true silence in this world, when there is really no such thing. This speaks to the duality of representing nature in film: it can be *realistic*, but never reality. Even in documentary film, a landscape is a constructed natural environment. The view of the camera creates the world for the audience, so nature in film is always at the same time both artificial and natural. The end result in *King Lear* was the creation of a world in which real silence did exist, and in fact was more apparent than sound itself.

The world of this film requires careful examination, especially in relation to its evolution in the director's mind. This cinematic environment grew from the same seeds as the world of the 1962 stage production: the need for an empty and open playing space, the idea of the play as a

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<sup>265</sup> Leggatt 97-98.

<sup>266</sup> Originally published in *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts* (Autumn 1969), reprinted in Roger Manvell, *Shakespeare and the Film* (London: JM Dent and Sons, 1971) 138.

<sup>267</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 204 (original emphasis).

juxtaposition of ancient and Elizabethan times but recognisable to a modern audience, and the perception of the natural world as cruel and challenging. Brook described the genesis of the film's setting thus:

One real notion that emerges from the plot is the notion of nature as something hostile, dangerous, against which man has to battle. The play is centered around the storm, but what counts from a psychological point of view is the contrast between the safe, enclosed places and the wild, unprotected places. Which leads you to two denominators of security: fire and fur. Having reached this point, we began to study the life of Eskimos.<sup>268</sup>

It is tempting to take Brook's anthropocentric view to task. His externalization of humanity and nature, and his reduction of nature to a boundary to human ambitions certainly warrant the attention of any ecologically-minded critic. Nevertheless, the world that Brook constructed was not one in which the human point of view was above the natural, nor were the human and the natural set up as diametric opposites. The culture clearly grew out of the environment, and clearly maintained its reliance on the natural world.

In his biography of the director, Trewin claims that it was limitation of funds that drove Brook to "decide upon a legendary world that was totally persuasive, its landscape as unobtrusive and visually acceptable as a landscape in a modern film, but corresponding to the nature of the society in *Lear*."<sup>269</sup> While financial constraints may have forced Brook to the remote area of northern Jutland where the film was shot, the landscape fitted Brook's conception of the play perfectly. While he sought to eliminate all imagery from the earlier stage production, the bleak snow-covered landscape more expansively captured the same basic sense as the broad gray walls in 1962. The cinematic world is not an empty space, but rather a space that evokes the feeling of vastness. The world dwarfs the human characters, and one gets the sense of aloneness among the disconnected humans. In order for this not to seem like an imposition on

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<sup>268</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 204.

<sup>269</sup> Trewin, *Peter Brook* 171.

the text, Brook needed to connect the fictional society of Shakespeare's play with the world he constructed to envelop that society. In other words, he ecopoetically developed this world so that the culture was implaced in its environment.

Brook's productions in the late 1960s turned to indigenous rituals and societies for inspiration in staging. In this film, Brook had to find a society that interacted closely with nature to fill the world. This was an exercise in implacement. The human society had to be at home in the world or the same problems of displacement that surfaced with the satyr play in *Oedipus* would recur. So the initial impulse toward the Inuit culture quoted above was expanded:

Most of the realistic elements...were taken from the life of Eskimos and the Lapps, because their life, from the viewpoint that interests us, has undergone very little change over the past thousand years, because it is still controlled by the basic natural conditions, by the contrast between hot and cold. As soon as we realized that we could take the visual aspect of the film from a society whose principal problem and principal function is to manage to survive under the specific climatic conditions in which the action of *Lear* unfolds, we found at the same time a whole series of elements from which our imagination enabled us little by little to deduce others.<sup>270</sup>

Whereas Brook's stage work drew on indigenous rituals for a connection between performance and the sacred, the film took a more superficial approach, using the Inuit and Lapp cultures for visual and physical clues. Nevertheless, the key to Brook's conception was the way natural conditions shaped the human cultures. The superficial appearances Brook and his design team found in these cultures inspired their imaginations, pushing their vision of this society further, just as it would inspire the imaginations of the film's audiences. While the style of the film reached back toward a world in which humanity was not as remotely separated from nature as ours is, Brook chose to highlight a competitive human-nature model while still relying on a worldview based on the interconnectedness of nature and culture.

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<sup>270</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 204.

The cast and crew quickly recognized that their reliance on these cultures for a “period” had a far more pragmatic advantage as well. Brook recounts in an interview from 2000 that they built

all the costumes on Lapland and Eskimo models, which are not aesthetic at all, but purely functional: to keep off the cold. Every single detail came out of that need, and what we in fact needed when we were filming twenty degrees below in middle of winter in Jutland. Everybody was delighted with their costumes, the only time I ever heard that. And I dressed like the others because it was the warmest costume there was.<sup>271</sup>

Here Brook presents an interesting example of the interconnection between art and nature.

Clearly, the cold of Jutland was not the only reason for choosing the warm fur costumes. It was an aesthetic choice, based on his vision for the film of the play and that film’s culture.

Nevertheless, the artistic choice was mediated, constructed as it were, by the natural world. The art, in this case fur costumes, not only constructed the world through its depictions of the landscape, but was necessarily constructed by the natural conditions of that landscape.

Critical reactions to the cinematic world have been mixed, but few have argued with its aptness for Brook’s vision of the play. Jones claims that the geographical location provided “an unlocalized and empty acting space which exceeded the wildest imagination of anyone who was thinking of an Elizabethan playhouse.”<sup>272</sup> This is a problematic comment on several counts.

While the space found in Jutland was certainly open and unlocalized, certain geographical aspects cannot be ignored because of the photographic realism of film imagery. Sand dunes, snow drifts, rutted wagon paths cut through the landscape, the sea and beach, and even the wooden “castles” are real physical presences in the film. In the theatre, Brook’s conception of the empty space was designed to more intensely fire the audience’s imagination. On an Elizabethan stage, with a minimum of sets and properties, words and gestures were used to

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<sup>271</sup> Moffitt 94.

<sup>272</sup> Jones 149-150.

evoke imagery and setting, such as Edgar's creation of Dover Cliff. In film, especially without computerized graphics or a constructed sound stage, the actual aspects of the landscape must be incorporated into the fabric of the film. Anthony Davies writes, "The dramatic function of the natural environment...has consistently been recognized as an important but sometimes intractable cinematic resource in the adaptation of stage plays."<sup>273</sup> The environment is important because it is literally the ground on which the film must be built, the backdrop for everything in the cinema. It is intractable, however, because no matter how much the film may be understood as constructing its world, the landscape cannot be drastically altered in most films. Brook's choice of costumes is a case in point: the landscape can be controlled in that it can be filmed in a certain way, but no director can change the weather.

Davies's study of Shakespeare on film is finely attuned to the differences between cinema and stage. He argues, "The spatial demands which a Shakespeare play makes of the medium of cinema is not the presentation of a geo-historical setting for action and dialogue, but rather an articulation which projects aspects of the play's dramatic substance."<sup>274</sup> Considering Brook's desire for a timeless setting, and his focus on using the landscape to express the darkness of the play and the challenge nature presents to the human characters, it would seem that this film is the epitome of Davies's ideology. Davies contradicts this however, concluding in regard to Brook's film that "there is a duality of treatment in the film whereby the camera tends to treat the actors and the environmental spatial detail separately."<sup>275</sup> The duality recognized by Davies is another way in which Brook maintained the distinction between culture and nature that he believed so integral to the play. In ecological terms, this distinction is not necessarily negative, so long as we understand that the human perspective is shaped by the

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<sup>273</sup> Davies 9.

<sup>274</sup> Davies 17.

<sup>275</sup> Davies 144.



environment. One strand of ecocriticism encourages the idea of manufacturing a utopian singularity between humanity and nature. Such a utopian vision, expressed in so many idyllic films and pastoral literature, is not only unrealistic, but also an extension of culture's imperialistic appropriation of nature. In the introduction to his green study of film, Jhan Hochman argues that "by suddenly conjuring a utopian oneness of nature and culture – a nature subsumable under culture or a culture naturalizing itself as Nature or nature – culture gives itself powers previously attributed to nature."<sup>276</sup> Reconnecting humanity to nature is part of this utopian side of the ecocritical/environmental project, but this fails to recognize the mutually constructing sense of nature and culture.

Pauline Kael's review of *King Lear* argues that, rather than centre the film on the octogenarian king, Brook focused more on the world. This is not entirely dissimilar to some of the comments relating to the 1962 stage production. She states, "One can glimpse the intention to make Lear himself less centrifugal and to use the icy empty landscapes...as a metaphor for the unyielding, ungoverned universe in which all men are pawns and there is no hope for anyone."<sup>277</sup> While this emphasis on the more-than-human world is apparent in the film, the landscape is not a metaphor but a physical representation of the violence and chaos in the universe of *King Lear*. Brook's focus on this aspect of the play fit the spirit of the era, and provided a new look at the play, originally developed in the 1962 version. Ecocriticism was not even a word at the time, but viewed from a modern perspective, it is clear that the importance and impact of the natural world on the film, and the sense that the cinematic world grew out of the natural landscape reveal the ecological undercurrents of the work. Concurrently, the division between humans and nature Brook sensed in the play, the rift which is never fully healed, and the notion of nature as a

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<sup>276</sup> Hochman 9.

<sup>277</sup> Pauline Kael, "Peter Brook's 'Night of the Living Dead'," *The New Yorker* (11 December 1971) 135.

nemesis to humanity, something against which the characters battle, are decidedly against environmentally-centered ideology. Nevertheless, these are aspects of the source material that could not be extricated from the film adaptation.<sup>278</sup>

In fact, the recognition of these aspects latent in Shakespeare's text may be one of Brook's less-acknowledged achievements with the film. He presents a dynamic vision of disintegration, one that seems to grow from the encompassing environment. Davies argues,

The animal-skin costumes, the flames in the hearth, the landscape in the exterior shots – all these suggest stasis rather than process. They indicate the relationship and the distinction between man and beast, and the hostility of bleak “nature”, but they hold these ideas within and around the action as monolithic statements whose significance, like a fixed stage set, becomes apparent in the dialogue.<sup>279</sup>

Davies's comment reveals the perceived interconnectedness between Brook's fictional society and nature, but I must take issue with his claim that this “suggests stasis.” These examples of the human-nature relationship are products of process, humanity and nature evolving together over time to reach the subsistence level of the culture Brook's film portrays. And if the landscape, the world of the film, was as static and unchanging as a theatrical set (in fact, if a theatrical set *was* static and unchanging), then the dynamic of the performance would fall apart. Performance is process inherently, and so stasis cannot be allowed into the equation. The hostility of nature is there, and the separation between humanity and the natural world may be there in the figure of Lear, but the relationship is not one of pure distinction. Rather there is co-construction evident in the film; the human condition is reflected in, and reflects, the conditions of the natural world.

One way the fictional *King Lear* society is depicted as being implaced in their environment is through travel. In the earlier stage production, Brook used the sound of horses to

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<sup>278</sup> Numerous sources claim Ted Hughes wrote a screenplay for Brook, adapting the play for film. Unfortunately, this text does not survive, as it would be interesting to compare the final result in the film to Hughes's adaptation, considering his eco-conscious sensibility.

<sup>279</sup> Davies 144.

indicate when a human character was arriving from a distance (see chapter three). The expansive possibility of the film medium allowed the portrayal of the characters' journeys across the landscape. The sense of travel allowed Brook to achieve three important visual and aesthetic effects: the creation of a sense of place, the depiction of the natural landscape, and the introduction of animals into the human world. While attempting to find an unlocalised landscape, Brook's depiction of travel differentiated the locations in which the action of the play occurred. The human characters' movements grounded them in the more-than-human world, providing a sense of place to their lives. The travel motif also showed the impact of human behaviour on the landscape. Several shots in the film reveal the muddy, rutted paths cut through the snow by human travel. Like scars on the landscape, these roads contribute to an ambivalence in the relationship between humanity and nature. Both leave their indelible mark on each other in the film. The human travel damages the world. In a way, this damage is also reflected back on the society as well. The storm, sometimes interpreted as nature's revenge against the human characters, washes away all marks upon the landscape, with only the man-made castles surviving the violent natural phenomenon.

The first image of the natural world on the screen comes when Kent is banished from the court (see appendix, figure four). In the foreground we see the solitary figure, dressed in white furs, before he rides off into the bleak landscape. Behind him, we see the remaining members of the court beginning their own journeys: some in covered wagons, some on horseback, all moving through the rocky, snowy terrain of the world. In *The Shifting Point*, Brook says,

If one is English – and the text of *Lear* is completely English – one will readily admit that the film *Lear* takes place in an England that no longer exists anywhere. Over the past thousand years, the English countryside has transformed itself into an artificial countryside. Try to find today, anywhere in the British Isles, a place that looks like the England of a thousand years ago. It doesn't exist.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Brook, *The Shifting Point* 204-205.

Here, Brook makes an explicit commentary on the devastation of the natural world wrought by modernity. The world of this *King Lear* looks with one eye back to a time before severe human impact on the world, while at the same time revealing that human technology has always left its mark on the landscape.

Brook's comment on the England of a millennium ago is somewhat problematic. As noted in my introduction, historians suggest that deforestation and enclosure altered the English landscape much earlier than is sometimes thought.<sup>281</sup> By the time Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, the Forest of Arden near his home had already been depleted of its trees for lumber, used in buildings and ships, but England was still far more densely forested than it is today. Thus, the imagery evoked by Brook's reference to the English landscape of a thousand years ago is far from the barren snow-covered setting of his film. Rather, something more akin to the world of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the Robin Hood tales seems far more appropriate for such a historical conception of the play's world. Some critics felt Brook's location jarred with the play, with comments like: "a legitimate experiment...but it leaves too much of the play behind,"<sup>282</sup> "the play is somehow reduced in stature as...profounder dimensions are lost,"<sup>283</sup> and "who wants to be alienated from Shakespeare's play and given the drear far side of the moon instead?"<sup>284</sup> While Brook's reference to a historical reading is problematic in terms of mimetic accuracy, it does expose how well-suited the location was for the story of *King Lear*. The most important

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<sup>281</sup> See for example, Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (New York and London: Penguin, 1983); Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, *The Mastery of Nature: Aspects of Art, Science, and Humanism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics, and the non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>282</sup> Leggatt 106.

<sup>283</sup> Laurilyn J. Harris, "Peter Brook's *King Lear*: Aesthetic Achievement or Far Side of the Moon?" *Theatre Research International* 11.3 (October 1986) 236.

<sup>284</sup> Kael 135.

point is that the ecopoetics of the film, the way it constructs the world and exists within its world, reveal the potency of this cinematic landscape.

One of the most powerful exterior shots in the film prior to the storm sequence is the interpolated hunt of Lear and his hundred knights (see appendix, figure five). From a distance, the camera shows the king and his entourage galloping across the terrain, framed in a wide-angle shot by the expansive landscape. Davies argues that “the bleak expanse of snow-covered undulations presents a pre-eminently static image; one of unrelieved, bitter desolation.”<sup>285</sup> The sense of the landscape, the emotional response Davies has to it, fits the apocalyptic conception of the play inherent in Brook’s directorial approach. Kustow’s comment, that the imagery of this scene “provid[es] a percussive reminder of the bitter struggle with nature”<sup>286</sup> furthers this notion of the dangerous natural world of the film. Nevertheless, both of these critics fail to acknowledge that the human society still manages to exist within this world. No matter how bleak and harsh nature is, the culture continues to interact with it, to coexist. The apocalyptic narrative is overcome, and even in the desolation and devastation that exists at the end of *King Lear*, the society and the natural world live on. The power of this shot is in its revelation of a sublime element in even the harshest natural environment. There is beauty here that is overlooked by most critics, but is acutely delivered in a different way in modern nature documentaries focusing on the Arctic. The world is harsh, but it is neither static nor dead. A complex ecosystem exists even here, and the human society clearly has found a way to be *in place* in this world.

The travel motif also introduces animals into the ecology of the film. The nearly ubiquitous horses introduce a variety of important ecological concepts into the discourse. On

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<sup>285</sup> Davies 146.

<sup>286</sup> Kustow 176.

one hand, they are images of humanity's anthropocentrism. Horses exist to serve the human characters in their travel; they are enslaved servants. However, they also function in the film as evocations of nature. The image of Lear and his hundred knights displays a beautiful frozen landscape. In this shot, none of the rutted roads are visible cutting through the terrain, and the sheer wildness of the moving image is awe inspiring. The landscapes Brook constructs in this shot and others like it are as sublime as a lush and lavish geography. Only in film can such imagery exist. On the stage, representations of nature are necessarily limited in scope. In film, Brook opened the world to viewers, evoking the environment and poignantly depicting how small humanity is when compared to the vast natural world. In the earlier stage production, Gloucester was left alone on stage during the brief offstage battle in act four. Dwarfed as he was by the immense RST stage, the diminutive actor Alan Webb was an emblem of man's smallness in the world. In the film, the human characters in shots like the hunting scene are similarly dwarfed by nature, they become the smallest element within the larger system. For a viewer today, these depictions of nature also call to mind some of the last wilderness areas on the planet, in the far north – locations that are constantly under threat of development as drilling locations for oil companies. Brook's film balances the idea that nature is vast and dangerous, an externality with which the tiny human characters are locked in constant competition, with the creation of beautiful and sublime natural landscapes.

Animals in *King Lear* are also used to enhance the apocalyptic narrative present in the film. At the onset of the storm, beginning as it did in the stage production with Lear's words "the terrors of the earth," the wind howls. The first image of the sheer chaos of the storm comes as Lear exits the confines of his daughter's home into the courtyard to see the horses of his knights in anxious disarray. He and the fool ride off at break-neck speed in a wagon until one of

the wheels breaks, toppling them onto the ground. Lear takes the horse and rides away from their carriage up a slope. At this moment, a flash of lightning strikes and the screen goes black for an instant. When the light returns, Lear and the horse are on the ground, apparently having been struck. The king has apparently caught less of the shock and continues on foot, leaving the horse behind still writhing in apparent pain (see appendix, figure six). His disregard for the animal shows something of Lear's character: this is the same king who believes that he can control nature, whose curses expect the environment to respond to his command and follow his will. Of course, this image of the stricken horse is a precursor for what is to come in the aftermath of the storm, when the blinded Gloucester wanders off into the wilderness through a field of horse carcasses (see appendix, figure seven). This is one of the most horrific images in the film, showing the power of the storm, and placing the human characters within and among the devastated natural world.

The only other animal imagery in the film comes near the end of the storm, as Lear sits in a hovel reflecting on the chaos in the outside world. Shakespeare gives the mentally troubled king some of the most poignant lines of the play as he says,

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,  
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
 Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you  
 From seasons such as these? (3.4.28-32)

While the original comment is most likely directed at poor humans who, like Lear himself, are at the mercy of nature, Brook has Scofield considering animals. Specifically, the king reflects on a number of drowned rats floating down a rivulet of rain water. Brook adds significance to this moment by cutting all the environmental noise and having Scofield's rendition of the soliloquy in voice over. This is a stark contrast with the Lear character who left his horse writhing in pain

on the hill at the outset of the storm. The king now, while perhaps not recognizing the value of these creatures for their own sake, certainly has some pity for them and relates their plight to his own.

This reveals a contradiction in Brook's *King Lear*. On the one hand, he sees nature as a dangerous thing in constant conflict with human society. On the other, he clearly sees it as something to which the humans in the play must reconcile themselves. Lear's journey into the stormy wilderness is similar to the pastoral trope of a movement into nature sparking self-awareness, at least partially through an increased respect for the natural world. This pastoral view of the play was a fairly popular and widespread theory amongst the play's critics around the time Brook was working on the film and warrants attention as an intertextual influence. Two theories on nature in the play proliferated, both of which seem to be dramatised in some way by Brook: the concept that nature takes revenge on Lear for his presumption of control over the world; and the more directly pastoral conception that it is only through his sojourn in the wilderness that Lear can appreciate the depth of his errors and move toward reconciliation and a return to sanity and the tranquility he desires. The first concept is best voiced by theatre critic Robert Speaight: "Here is nature taking her revenge on the man who has defied her; nature let loose, it seems, by the 'great gods that keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads'. But the gods are remote and nameless, while Nature is immediate with the title and terrors of the storm."<sup>287</sup> In this conception, nature is an external entity with its own desires, most of which are leveled against Lear, it is Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis put into dramatic action.

Marvin Rosenberg's study of the play, which combines a critical study with readings of some of the key performances of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, takes Speaight's concepts a step further. His central thesis is that Lear's sin against nature is to command it to destroy itself, arguing that

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<sup>287</sup> Robert Speaight, *Nature in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1955) 108.



it is through dichotomies that ideas about nature are expressed in the play. In Rosenberg's own words, "A nuclear word like 'nature' may fission into multiple significances, including antimeanings: a 'natural' son is 'unnatural'; Lear calls on nature to destroy nature."<sup>288</sup> Both Speaight and Rosenberg give a strong voice to the natural world, but they do so only in anthropomorphic ways. Nature wants revenge against Lear because of his anthropocentric commands to it. Rather than demand nature's adherence to human desires, as Lear does, they suggest that nature has human desires. The danger here is in valuing the natural world only in its relation to human society. One can see an aspect of this viewpoint in Brook's film. His choice to begin the howling wind of the storm immediately as Scofield grumbles out the vow that his vengeance will be the "terrors of the earth" certainly substantiates this view. Nevertheless, Brook's ecopoetic construction of the film world maintains the multiple levels of human-nature interaction. On the one hand, nature is a dangerous externality, while on the other it is not only a sublime and beautiful landscape but also the root of the human culture.

An alternate critical suggestion postulated at this time is that *King Lear* is a tragic inversion of the pastoral tradition. Colie and Lindheim, both published in 1974, are the main proponents of this viewpoint. In Colie's view, nature as it is represented in the play is utterly devoid of any pastoral remnants, but the play's structure is something like a pastoral tragedy. She argues,

Chaos is come, and nature gives no indication of future reconstitution, even promise of the seasonal round. All the same, there is a sense in which the storm gives comfort to the desperate King, even in its denial to him of a comforting antidote to his condition: in just its wildness and intractability, nature seems to Lear indifferent throughout to human fate, but sympathetic in providing him with a dramatic background tonally appropriate to his mood and his mental state.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Rosenberg 6.

<sup>289</sup> Rosalie L. Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) 303.

This statement reveals the awkwardness that can arise when discussing representations of nature in film. There is conflict between the intellectualised conception of nature as indifferent, and the idea of nature as a fitting setting for the unfolding of the drama. While rejecting the idea of nature as an antithetical entity to humanity, Colie imbues the world of *King Lear* with some level of consciousness by arguing that it is indifferent but sympathetic. In her formulation, it is only in the structure of the play, in Shakespeare's decision to create a chaotic natural world reflective of Lear's mental state that we can see the sort of human-nature interaction commonly found in pastorals.

Lindheim takes a somewhat alternate view, arguing from the point of view of the effect nature has on human characters in the pastoral tradition. In relation to *King Lear*, she argues that despite the fact that it approaches certain pastoral tropes, and incorporates some of the characteristic features of pastoral, the play does not fully manage to become a pastoral tragedy because of Lear's inability to overcome the problems that led to his expulsion into the wilderness. Either by altering his life upon his return to society, or by dying and becoming a metaphorical representation of the seasonal cycles, the protagonist must take the lessons she or he learns in nature back to heal the problems of the cultural world. It is because Lear fails to do this that the play cannot be fully considered a pastoral tragedy. Lindheim argues that pastoral plays take on the convention of linking the protagonist's death with the seasonal cycle from the conventions of pastoral elegies (as discussed in chapter three). The form of the elegy allows for tension to build as the protagonist's action signal a rift between the human society and the natural world. In the end, the elegy creates a consolation between the society of the main character and nature that had previously been torn asunder.<sup>290</sup> The lack of any consolation at the end of the play reduces its impact in pastoral terms, making it impossible for it to cross the

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<sup>290</sup> Lindheim 182.

boundary into the realm of pastoral tragedy. What neither Lindheim nor Colie take into consideration, however, is the internalization of the natural world that the protagonist accepts during the violent storm. Perhaps it is only in the examination of performance and the effective portrayal of this process that the pastoral qualities of *King Lear* can be fully realized.

Michael Long's 1976 book, *The Unnatural Scene*, concludes, "Shakespeare realizes the tragic paradox in all its intensity by working with a model for understanding human life which has its basis in a metaphysic of the seasons, built in its turn on the popular dialectics of seasonal folk-lore, superstition and magic."<sup>291</sup> Shakespeare, in other words, is explicitly concerned with the rhythms of the natural world, the interaction between humanity and nature, and the ways humanity explains its relation to nature. Long argues that the central concern of the tragedies is the way "in which the demands of socialization make men blind or inflexible, shutting off the consciousness from the forces which are within and around them."<sup>292</sup> Lear's tragedy is not that he mistakenly empowers his daughters, but that the civilization which he has contributed to is no longer responsive to its environment. In Brook's film, in which the aesthetic of the fictional human world is utterly reliant on the natural world, this idea seems to lose sway. Nevertheless, it is in the discovery of certain pastoral elements within the play that Long's thesis holds the most relevance in relation to Brook's film. Long argues, "The green world of psychic renewal is the storm-lashed heath, and the exuberance of the metamorphosed mind is the madness of the King 'cut to th' brains'."<sup>293</sup> In other words, Lear's sojourn in the wilderness changes him, in a way for the better, but it also strips him of many of the societal trappings of his mind. His madness reveals that he is now in tune with the natural world, and this is the link that is renewed. In Scofield's reverie over the drowned rats we see Brook developing a Lear who is at least

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<sup>291</sup> Michael Long, *The Unnatural Scene: a study in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1976) 218.

<sup>292</sup> Long 7-8.

<sup>293</sup> Long 179.

somewhat reconciled to the natural environment. His thinking is clear, albeit intensely morose, and his thoughts are all directed to the world that he has either neglected or attempted to command.

Long makes a poignant comment regarding Lear's plight in the storm saying, "The protagonist himself is fully receptive to the meaning of his crisis and exposure, and *survives* the journey through the wild."<sup>294</sup> It is in this moment, when Scofield's Lear is contemplating the terrors wrought by the natural world upon itself, that he is most open to the meaning of his retreat to the wilderness. He recognizes the danger of nature, and fully feels the difference between those in shelter and those exposed to the elements. It can even be suggested that the self-annihilation he sees in nature presents the king with an alternate vision of the trouble he has caused himself. Long's commentary reveals, in parallel with the sentiments of Joseph Meeker, that in this play, as in the drama of evolution, survival is of the utmost importance. This momentary revival does not necessarily exist in the text – Lear's words seem to be directed at Poor Tom and other humans trapped in the wilderness without shelter. Therefore the inclusion of the image of the dead rats suggests that something new is happening in the performance. The lack of environmental noise, with Scofield speaking the words in voice over, signifies an important moment. Brook uses the manufactured silence sparingly in the film: at the opening, in the final shot, at various moments in the storm when the lightning strikes, and at this moment in the hovel. At other times, the sound may seem nonexistent, but it is always there, however muted. This emphasises the vocal and visual elements here. In the end, this moment is important because it is expressive of many of the important critical conceptions of the natural world in the play. It also ties the human culture of this world to the environment, the placement

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<sup>294</sup> Long 163 (original emphasis).

of Lear, nearly drowned himself, in relation to the rats is a clear suggestion of the connection between the society and its natural surroundings.

There are further elements of the film implacing the human society within its natural environment. The costumes, mentioned above in relation to the frozen world of the film, are not only suggestive of an Inuit or Lapp culture, but also evidence, along with the hunting scene, of the society's close ties to nature. Whereas the stage production outfitted the characters in aged and worn leather, signifying little more than a culture removed in time from our own, the choice of furs in the film makes the society more ageless, as such costumes are still in use by the model cultures today. William Chaplin's review of the film provides a strikingly ecology-minded reaction to Lear's costume, "Then we see all of him: he is in the garb of pagan divinity, hooded in feathers and matted cloth, as if he were wearing the armor of pre-historic nature, some kind of covering that grows out of the body itself."<sup>295</sup> So even before Lear's reconciliation with nature on the heath, this reviewer sees him as emblematic of a natural order, a relationship between man and the non-human world that is reciprocal. Chaplin's comment reveals a discrepancy in the film that he himself fails to notice: other than the horses, rats, and the few sheep in Poor Tom's hovel, no animals are seen in the film. In the hunting montage, the audience witnesses the aftermath of the pursuit, the return home, but there is no suggestion of which animals are hunted, nor is there any clue as to how the culture of the hunt in this society interacts with its quarry. Nevertheless, the mutually constructed relationship between nature and culture remains the key to the film's ecopoetics.

Beyond the costumes, there are several ritualised moments in the film that also provide a glimpse into the film's ecopoetics. Both come in the opening scene, as Lear prepares to divide

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<sup>295</sup> William Chaplin, "Our Darker Purpose: Peter Brook's *King Lear*," *Arion: a Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 1, New Series (Spring 1973) 174.

his kingdom amongst his three daughters. The first is the love test, during which each daughter is given the right to speak while holding a ceremonial orb. Despite Brook's attempts to remove all vestiges of imagery from the stage production, the orb and this ritual are clearly reminiscent of the earlier performance. The orb is rough, not perfectly spherical, and is topped with a small cross, suggesting the difficult balance in Shakespeare's text between the paganism of ancient Britain and the religiosity of early modern times. This ritualisation of the love contest suggests that this occurrence is not a completely original action which Lear undertakes. All the actors in Lear's game play their parts to perfection, except the "rebellious" Cordelia. As the love ritual occurs, Gloucester uncovers a map of the kingdom, revealing the lands which the daughters stand to inherit. The map is on the floor of the rough throne room, and is covered in large furs similar to the costumes. The map itself looks as if it's carved into the wood of the floor, and walking across it, then, would be an everyday experience for the king. This suggests a certain power that Lear believes he has not only over his kingdom as a political entity, but over the land itself.

Maps are problematic cultural artifacts in relation to ecological discourse. They can be seen as reductive symbols of humankind's domination of nature, reducing the vastness and the splendor of the world into a few lines scribbled across a piece of paper. Certainly, in the time of colonial enterprise, Shakespeare understood the power that a map could wield in terms of humanity's conquering of nature, and of the European triumph over indigenous peoples. Hawkes claims, "This sense of maps as divisive and diminishing, the means whereby sacred spaces may be grossly desecrated, is often strongly and emblematically present in Shakespeare."<sup>296</sup> In *King Lear*, the map is certainly divisive, with lines drawn separating the

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<sup>296</sup> Terence Hawkes, *King Lear*, Writers and Their Work Series (Plymouth: Northcote House and the British Council, 1995) 4-5.

naturally united land into three distinct spaces. This scene calls to mind the division of England amongst the rebels in Shakespeare's earlier *Henry IV, part 1* (3.1). Mortimer recounts that the Archdeacon divided the country amongst them according to the natural boundaries of the Severn and Trent rivers. Hotspur, feeling that his land is encroached upon by the boundary, claims,

I'll have the current in this place dammed up,  
And here the smug and silver Trent shall run  
In a new channel fair and evenly.  
It shall not wind with such a deep indent,  
To rob me of so rich a bottom here. (3.1.98-102)

The ensuing argument has nearly as much to do with the feasibility of such a plan as with the resulting change in boundaries, and nearly unsettles the plans of the rebels.

A similar sense of ownership over the landscape, and jealousy regarding the tripartite shares of it, exists in *King Lear*. Lear describes Goneril's land as being, "With shadowy forests and with champains riched, / With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads" (1.1.62-63). He says nothing of Regan's land but that it is, "No less in space, validity, and pleasure, / Than that conferred on Goneril" (80-81). Finally, the only claim regarding Cordelia's plot is that it is, "A third more opulent than [her] sisters'" (85). Lear's vague descriptions of the land go some way to suggesting that while the map may be a reductive device, there is still some celebration of nature's beauty amongst the culture. It is interesting, then, that Brook cut these lines from the film (though, according to the prompt-book, not from the earlier stage production). Many lines were necessarily cut in order to keep the film to a reasonable length for audiences, and the fact film is able to better capture the expansive landscape of the world allows Brook to display the land rather than simply describe it. Additionally, the filming location in Jutland makes the description somewhat contradictory, as such territories as Lear describes do not exist in the fictional world of the film or in the real world where it was shot.

Probably the strongest emblem of the cinematic society's implacement in nature is Poor Tom. Edgar's transformation from noble courtier to insane vagabond begins after his escape from his father's house into the frozen countryside. He removes his outer furs and rolls himself in a pool of mud, convincing the soldiers hunting him that he is not their quarry. As the film continues, he loses more and more clothing, finally appearing nearly naked, with only a loincloth covering his body in the hovel. Certainly, in this frozen world, he has some connection to the natural world, some means of survival, even stripped to his skin. Maurice Charney suggests, "If man in a state of nature is 'a poor, bare, forked animal,' clothes are mere 'lendings' that offer no defence against the tempest. Only a naked man can survive on the heath."<sup>297</sup> In the film, however, Lear and the fool remain clothed, and both outlast the storm, if only for a time. It seems, rather, that Poor Tom is an emblematic figure, a creature of the subconscious conjured by Edgar as his disguise, and this alter-ego itself is his means of survival in a world turned upside-down by the storm and by the human society of the film world. Tom represents, in many ways, humanity completely in nature. As mentioned, he is mostly naked, and the hovel that he has turned into his at least temporary home affords only the barest of shelter from the violent uproar in nature. He lives there amongst a small herd of sheep, and he has various twigs and branches sticking out of his hair (see appendix, figure eight).

The imagery here is distinctly Christian. In the midst of the storm, Brook shows Tom in front of a white backdrop (ostensibly the wall of the hovel), rain beating down on his bare chest and outstretched arms. His legs are close together, and the twigs in his hair form a distinctly crown-like shape. Jorgens substantiates this reading, saying that he appears "naked and crowned

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<sup>297</sup> Maurice Charney, "'We put fresh garments on him': Nakedness and Clothes in *King Lear*," *Some Facets of King Lear: Essays in Prismatic Criticism*, eds. Rosalie L. Colie and F.T. Flahiff (London: Heinemann, 1974) 79.



with thorns,”<sup>298</sup> and the presence of sheep in his hovel lends it further credence. In a play that constantly mediates between the Christian and the pagan, it seems that Edgar’s alter-ego presents the opposite end of the spectrum to his brother’s character, who prays for advancement to the Goddess Nature. Edgar becomes a healing instrument within the play, saving first the insane king in the storm, then his father wandering blind through the wilderness, and finally the society from the ruthless rule of his brother Edmund. Leggatt reads the character in a different manner, albeit equally as emblematic in terms of his ties to nature. He argues, “As Lear contemplates Tom – ‘Is man no more than this?’ – the camera pans down his shivering body and on ‘Thou art the thing itself’ it reaches his loincloth. It has made its decision about where the essence of the naked animal lies.”<sup>299</sup> There are numerous problems with this reading. First, the camera is not a conscious entity, but rather an instrument of the gaze of the director and the cinematic team. Secondly, in this instance, the camera’s gaze is meant to reflect Lear’s, as it is his words that accompany the movements of perspective. Poor Tom cannot be *only* the emblem of human sexuality in the play, a decidedly natural archetype, but is also the redemptive figure connected to the natural world.

As the storm lifts, and Poor Tom has effectively served his king and his father as their link to (temporary) salvation, there is a literal and metaphorical change in the weather. Lear and his fool make their way toward the sea coast in the back of a covered wagon. A small ray of sunshine breaks through the curtains and falls on the king’s face, arousing him from his slumber (see appendix, figure nine). This is the only time in the film that the sun breaks through the seemingly interminable cloud cover, and as the king sneaks out the back of his transport it is clear that the scene has shifted to “Dover.” Rather than the iconic white-chalk cliffs, Brook

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<sup>298</sup> Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991) 306.

<sup>299</sup> Leggatt 98.

locates this scene on a coast of rolling sand dunes (see appendix, figure ten). This return to the sea is important structurally as it signals the beginning of the end of the film, and Lear seems almost uncontrollably attracted to the ocean. Sitting barefoot next to the blind Gloucester (whose mock suicide and salvation occurred on the same plot of beach), he is compelled to escape from Cordelia's guards by running headlong into the crashing surf (see appendix, figure eleven). Leggatt observes, "If we have returned to a point of origin, it is not the beginning of the story, or of anything social at all – it is the biological origin of life itself. Following some instinct, the characters come to the sea to die."<sup>300</sup> This is suggestive of a further tie between the fictional human society and nature. If the Inuits and Lapps are Brook's models for the humans in the film, then it is only natural that the sea, which provides sustenance for these northern cultures, is the final location for the film.

Many of the film's ecological implications are evident through inversions. For example, it would seem that the most effective way to present a sublime vision of nature would be with high-resolution colour film, but Brook evokes this imagery with grainy black and white photography. Similarly, the appearance of the sun and return to the sea create a sense of hope in the rebirth of nature just before the human-caused tragedy of the play spirals out of control to its inevitable conclusion. Such inversions are in some ways subversive, or at least external additions, to the Shakespearean original, but they heighten the power and the effectiveness of the film, as well as providing many of the key places for ecocritical interpretation. Nowhere are the inversions of Brook's film more evident, prevalent, and important than in the storm sequence. As previously mentioned, flashes of lightning coincide with momentary darkness, up until the characters reach the hovel when the darkness of the interior scene is illuminated by the lightning. The camera is coated in a film of water at times, projecting the audience's gaze into the

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<sup>300</sup> Leggatt 100.

cinematic world, forcing an experience of the world onto viewers' senses. As in the stage production, sound is vital to the film's storm, with howling winds, pounding rain, and even a strange synthesized noise making up the aural landscape. Leggatt argues, "The effect...is that the medium itself is breaking down, chaos in the universe conveyed by chaos in the editing room; and in breaking down it calls attention to itself."<sup>301</sup> Rather than being an alienating effect, this brings the audience further into a world which is inverted by the violence of the storm.

Brook's strategy was to use a colourless form of surrealism in the storm in order to give the audience this sense of experiencing the world. Many critics fail to recognize this inversion in the film. Douglas Brode claims that the cinematic style of the storm calls to mind both the acid trip culture of the late 1960s and the ending of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, thus connecting the world of *King Lear* with its modern audience. He then claims that such imagery is too much of a divergence from the source material saying,

Shakespeare presented the immense natural world (macrocosm) reflecting man's little inanities (microcosm), but since Brook's *mise en scène* was barren from the beginning, his storm seems only one more aspect of the heightened ugliness – an arbitrary storm rather than the logical extension of Lear's inner torment.<sup>302</sup>

Of course, Brook's adaptation was intended for an audience that no longer viewed the world in terms of macrocosm and microcosm. Overall, Brode's view is myopic in relation to the storm's place in both Shakespeare's text and Brook's film. Any element of the natural world is more than just a representation of a character's psychological status, especially when translated from page to performance. The trees on which Orlando hangs his poems to Rosalind in *As You Like It* must become real physical entities, whether the stage posts at the Globe or a real grove of trees

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<sup>301</sup> Leggatt 99.

<sup>302</sup> Douglas Brode, *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 210.

on film. So while a psychoanalytical reading of *King Lear* may work when viewing the storm as an occurrence in the text, it ignores the physical reality of the storm in performance.

Leggatt's reading of the film is far more accepting of the materiality of the physical world in performance, especially in relation to cinema. Nevertheless, he also underestimates the experiential effectiveness of the unrealism of Brook's style. Leggatt says, "The cold [in the film] is so intense that when in the storm scene it rains, this intrusion from Shakespeare's text has an unfortunate side effect: we feel a sense of relief that at last there is a warm spell."<sup>303</sup> The sheer violence of the storm and the obviously apocalyptic aftermath make it difficult to believe that anyone could find comfort in this storm. Brook's surrealistic take on the storm furthers the sense that the world has turned completely upside-down. His use of imagery that was reminiscent of popular cultural icons and his connection of the audience with the characters through visual effects and sound provides an experiential sense of the phenomenon of the storm that is stronger than a more realistic storm could be. Perhaps this can be better understood when contrasting Brook's vision of the storm with that of the contemporaneous director, Grigori Kozintsev.

Kozintsev worked on his film of *King Lear* at the same time as Brook, and while the two were not directly influenced by each other, they did exchange letters and ideas during the production process. Unlike his fellow director, Kozintsev published a diary he kept from his first conception of the film through to its final cut. Titled *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, this account not only explains much of what the director was thinking about the film specifically, but also many of his more general thoughts on performance theory and on cinema as an art form. The diary reveals exactly how much thought went into Kozintsev's conception of the natural world for the film. As the title suggests, much of Kozintsev's work focused on the creation of an appropriate location for the epic tragedy of the play. According to his account, Kozintsev

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<sup>303</sup> Leggatt 97.

realized the importance of the world of the play very early, saying, “From the first screen tests one had straight away to shoot not simply an actor, but his whole living environment, a single cell in the world of tragedy.”<sup>304</sup> His connection of the human with the natural is more overt than Brook’s, but in contrast to Brook the human characters remain the focal point. Despite his very explicit thinking about the natural world, Kozintsev continually sees it as little more than the surroundings and the environment for the human story. Unlike Brook’s efforts to transform the space of performance into place, Kozintsev remains interested in the world as merely a location in which to tell the story of *King Lear*. The world is more than just a frame for the story but an active participant in Brook’s film, and thus is valued for itself rather than just as a landscape.

The way Kozintsev writes about his filming locations provides evidence of his highly conscious but consistently anthropocentric way of thinking. After finding some of his key spots he says, “It was possible after all to film a world which didn’t exist; it meant that it did exist somewhere; even if only in fragments, and that it would be possible to grasp its natural laws, to discover the links between the fragments, and to populate it with characters.”<sup>305</sup> Kozintsev was looking for a realistic world for his film, one that would effectively fit the tone of the tragedy much as the world Brook found for his production. In the finished product, however, he puts very little focus on the world within the film. Apart from a few brief shots, Kozintsev never presents a wide-angle landscape shot, meaning that there is no evocation of the sublime natural world in the film. His *King Lear* feels manufactured, especially in certain locations such as the barren heath during the storm. Rather than actual snow or mud, the textured ground was created by years of ash and soot pollution from a nearby power plant. The establishing shot for the storm is one of the few wide shots in the film, and it attempts to pass the landscape off as natural.

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<sup>304</sup> Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, trans. Mary Mackintosh (London: Heinemann, 1977) 39.

<sup>305</sup> Kozintsev 128.

Kozintsev even admits the manufactured element to this landscape when he writes, “It was the surface of some as yet undiscovered planet. There was nothing real about it but at the same time it was completely real.”<sup>306</sup> This focus on realism creates a tension that is rife within Kozintsev’s film, whereas Brook more readily embraces the multiplicity of cinema as an art form and the way it can present nature.

There are three important aspects of Kozintsev’s film that warrant special attention. The first is the general look and feel of the cinematic world. Kozintsev conceived the film on a trip to Japan, and drew inspiration from the ruination of Hiroshima for the world in which his *King Lear* would take place. As if directing an ecological parable, he describes the world saying, “People and earth make a complex unity; the scenery of *Lear* changes before one’s very eyes: people mutilate the land and then finally depart not to the peace of the tomb but into the earth which they themselves have trampled upon and scorched.”<sup>307</sup> The world is drab and gray, dusty, populated as much by massive craggy boulders as it is by people. This world is every bit as violent, dangerous, and devastated as Brook’s landscape, especially considering that one important element is missing from the world, sound. In the opening montage of peasants shuffling toward their king’s fortress, there is faint music (composed by Dmitri Shostakovich) and the sound of their feet on the gravel, but no wind, no birds, no environmental noise at all. The world is utterly silent, and remains so for much of the film. Only occasionally do we hear the waves on the beach, the birds, but even the wind is barely audible throughout much of the storm. The lack of environmental sound makes the world unrealistic, contradicting Kozintsev’s insistence on realism in his world-creation, whereas Brook’s world was not intended to be realistic, and so the silence is an accepted element of the imaginative landscape of his film.

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<sup>306</sup> Kozintsev 230.

<sup>307</sup> Kozintsev 80.

The costumes are fur, like Brook's, and fit this cold world perfectly. They are more period in style than Brook's but still approach a timeless look. In his study of Shakespearean film adaptations, Jorgens contrasts Kozintsev's work with Brook's saying that it is "timeless in a different sense – a superimposition...of the Christian middle ages and the predatory renaissance, the furs worn by the characters stressing not only the kinship of men and animals but the pampered isolation of the rich from the poor."<sup>308</sup> The connection with animals, and thus with the environment, is undermined in the film because Kozintsev chose to show only a brief hunting scene. Lear and his knights are not the impressively galloping gang that they are in Brook's film, but a disorganized rabble who do not seem to take their chore seriously at all. They laugh and giggle, and there is no hint of their quarry until they return to Goneril's home and are suddenly carrying a wild boar on a spit. They hunt in a desolate, dried-up river bed, with large boulders lining the path and not a tree in sight. While Brook's world may have seemed the dark side of the moon to critics, Kozintsev's world was equally as barren and harsh to its human inhabitants. The reason why more critics react negatively to Brook's cinematic world and accept Kozintsev's is that the latter places less importance on the world. As stated above, Brook celebrated the grandeur of this desolate place, while the focus for Kozintsev always came back to the people in this world.

The second important comparative point between these films is the storm. In his diary, Kozintsev wonders about the power of cinema to portray such a devastating elemental uprising. He feels that the storm is another world, a place "into which the heroes have been flung together with the landscape which has been discovered, beyond the boundaries of the world in which they lived."<sup>309</sup> Kozintsev says,

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<sup>308</sup> Jorgens 246.

<sup>309</sup> Kozintsev 228.

Does the superiority of cinema lie only in clever simulation, imitation? It is at this point [the storm] in the tragedy that both the actions and the links (very complex ones) between the characters and nature are very far from naturalistic. On the other hand Shakespeare's world is still realistic; even the excursions beyond the boundaries of the living are materialistic.<sup>310</sup>

It seems that Kozintsev's musings on the storm suggest that such things happen, storms are materially real elements, but the action that occurs in the storm is not natural, and this is where the tension lies. Kozintsev began his storm similarly to Brook's, with images of animals in chaos: wolves and boar run haphazardly for shelter, a pack of horses aimlessly run in various directions. This is a surprising contrast to the earlier hunting scene in which animals are conspicuously absent. Brook took his storm to its surrealistic limits, while Kozintsev kept his within itself. The king wanders across the plain being pelted with rain and musing over his own thoughts. The storm is mostly quiet, with little environmental noise even when we can see the characters being blown about by the wind. Buchman's study of the two films concludes that Kozintsev "emphasizes the change in the material and physical world in which we perceive the hero, Brook presents the events within the psychological space of the troubled King."<sup>311</sup> This is not the case. Kozintsev's emphasis on the human characters places nearly all the attention on them, and his Lear (Yuri Yarvet) maintains a much more understated madness than Scofield. Kozintsev's argument that the storm presents unrealistic interactions between humans and nature undercuts his efforts at realism in creating the *mise-en-scène*. Brook's film, alternatively, accepts that the storm is a natural event that must be experienced and thus presents a sensory barrage to the audience.

Finally, one natural element that connects these two films is the prevalence of the sea at the end. While Shakespeare's text certainly calls for the end of the play to occur near the sea,

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<sup>310</sup> Kozintsev 227.

<sup>311</sup> Lorne M. Buchman, *Still in Movement: Shakespeare on Screen* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 54.



perhaps even at Dover cliffs, both directors make the ocean a visual and material reality in their films. In Kozintsev's film, the sea appears early, at the montage of Cordelia and France being married at the coast. He then has one brief celebratory montage of the natural world, panning over the sea coast while waves crash to the shore and birds fly overhead. Even with black and white film, the sea almost appears to have a bluish tint at this moment, but it is the only time that the focus on the ocean will be so near to sublimity. Other images of the sea are contrasted with the fire of war, and the coast is filled with French warships. Yarvet's Lear dies staring at the sea through a hole in the castle wall, mourning over the body of Cordelia. It is as if Kozintsev was searching for the sort of grandeur that the coast can provide visually without ever achieving it. Rather than being its own entity, a participant in the action of the film, the sea is a counterpoint to the human-caused fires of war, and remains the symbol of purity even once the land has been devastated by its human occupants.

Brook's return to the sea celebrates this landscape, embraces its grandeur, and allows the characters to wallow in their smallness and insignificance when compared with the ocean. Throughout the film, he constantly emphasizes how small the human characters are within their landscape, whereas Kozintsev always places the humans at the centre of the action, and they appear larger than their world. In a way, the sea is also an image of timelessness, and a frightening reminder of the consequences of human actions in the natural world. Prior to her work in *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson was a marine biologist, devoted to protecting the oceans. The conclusion of her 1950 book *The Sea Around Us* is a poetic commentary on the importance of the sea, and is fitting in relation to the sea imagery in these two films:

In its mysterious past it encompasses all the dim origins of life and receives in the end, after, it may be, many transmutations, the dead husks of that same life. For all at last

return to the sea – to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the ever-flowing stream of time, the beginning and the end.<sup>312</sup>

In both films, the sea is an emblem of the timeless nature of the story being told, and Carson's comments certainly substantiate their view of the ocean. The celebration of the sea, the sublimity of Brook's coastal shots, and the element of natural mythology that it lends to his film make it a much stronger statement of eco poetic world-creation than it appears in Kozintsev's work. None of this is to say that Kozintsev's film cannot be read for its eco poetic strategies, it just appears to fall into the trap of valuing the human story over the natural, and Brook's film moves beyond that. He blends the human and the natural history of the world in order to eco poetically create the sensory experience of place that is so important to ecological ideology.

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<sup>312</sup> Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*, Revised Edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 212.

## **Part 2: *The Tempest***

## Chapter 5

### *The Tempest in Space: Forbidden Planet and Adaptation*

In part one of this thesis, I examined *King Lear* as a play that provided fertile ground for apocalyptic theatrical/cinematic interpretation. The performances that I studied were closely engaged with their own world, relying on aspects of the real environment for the creation of their imaginary worlds. The performance worlds that were most effective from an ecopoetic standpoint, as I suggested, were targeted not at a mimetically accurate representation of the world, but as tools for imagining the world as it could be. As part of this imaginative project, the performances sought to bring the audience into the staged or filmed world, engaging spectators on an experiential level. *King Lear* was seen, in many ways, as an inversion of pastoral comedy, almost a dystopic play which fit the tumultuous and violent times of the 1960s. Using the work of Peter Brook as my main focus, I used an ecopoetic method of analysis to reveal the ecological resonances of these constructed worlds, the relationships between the fictional places and the real world, and the possible significance of these worlds for the modern interpreter. In this section, I turn my attention to *The Tempest*. Though not necessarily a play ripe for the same expression of apocalyptic or dystopic discourse, I argue that stage and cinematic interpretations of the play reveal a certain ambiguity between the play's setting, its society, and the interactions between the two.

I begin this section studying the American cinematic adaptation of the play *Forbidden Planet*.<sup>313</sup> This may seem a strange choice for several reasons. First, the film's indebtedness to Shakespeare's play is considered tenuous by some, a fact that I confront later in this chapter.

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<sup>313</sup> Dir. Fred McLeod Wilcox, *Forbidden Planet*, actors Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis, Leslie Nielsen, screenplay Cyril Hume, MGM Picture: Loew's Studios, 1956.

Second, the film was released prior to the accepted birth of modern environmental consciousness (as marked by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962). I show, however, that the same environmental issues that precipitated Carson's landmark work were in play prior to this date, and that while it still can be used as a point of demarcation, it is not an absolute starting point for environmental consciousness. Third, *Forbidden Planet* is a science fiction film, thus it does not deal with a natural world that is similar to our own. I argue that the play, while set in a very different fictional place, carries the discourse of Shakespeare's island into the modern world, taking the problematised utopia of *The Tempest* into a new setting in a way that only science fiction work can. Tony Howard says, "For once the superimposed film genre fits exactly because *The Tempest* itself was proto-science-fiction, a response to the utopian possibility of literally finding/founding new worlds in America, of using accumulated human knowledge to start anew."<sup>314</sup> In looking at the way the film constructs its "new world" and how that world is, despite its alien nature, reflective of our world, we can begin to see the ecopoetics of *Forbidden Planet*. Additionally, in examining how the film interacts and adapts Shakespeare's original play, we can see how *The Tempest* can be reimagined ecopoetically to fit both the aesthetics and the politics of the modern world. In order to make this clear, I include a comparison with Peter Brook's 1957 production of the play.<sup>315</sup> In the first part of this thesis, Brook's work is the main focus of my examination, while here it serves as a comparative touchstone for the analysis of other works.

The world in which both *Forbidden Planet* and Brook's *The Tempest* were produced was very different from the world of the 1960s, but it anticipated many of the problems of the later

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<sup>314</sup> Tony Howard, "Shakespeare's Cinematic Offshoots," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 307.

<sup>315</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, *The Tempest*, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, opening 13 Aug. 1957, touring in London at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, opening 5 Dec. 1957.

decade and was embroiled in similar conflicts set in different contexts. The Cold War, and the related nuclear testing, was running high, and colonial tensions had boiled over in several locations around the Globe. In fact, the imaginative thrust of nuclear apocalypse that I described in chapter three was also evident in the 1950s, though it also incorporated issues of colonialism, displacement of indigenous populations, and ecological devastation. I am referring here to America's testing of nuclear devices on Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific Ocean.

From 1946 to 1958, Bikini Atoll was the location of over twenty nuclear tests by the U.S. government. The Atoll, a chain of islands around a central lagoon with Bikini Island being the largest and the seat of the local population, is part of the Marshall Islands, a territory gained by the U.S. from Japan after World War II. The area was home to an isolated indigenous population that survived entirely off the land and had little trade or commerce with the neighbouring islands or the world at large. Prior to the beginning of nuclear testing, the U.S. moved the indigenous population to Rongerick Atoll, a place roughly one-sixth the size of Bikini Atoll, without a natural lagoon for fishing, and with little natural food and water. Further, Rongerick Atoll was considered by the people of Bikini to be a place haunted by evil spirits, a fact ignored by the more "logical" American government. While displaced, the Bikini people suffered from starvation and culture-loss, as they tried to adapt to an entirely new way of life that was dependent on the trade of coconut oil with neighbouring islands and traders from other parts of the world. This nearly instantaneous transition was difficult for the Bikini people and they suffered from starvation while displaced. In May of 1954, the U.S. deployed its most powerful nuclear device, the hydrogen bomb, to the region for testing. The force of the impact from this blast blew nuclear fallout throughout the Marshall Islands, caused gale-force winds, destroyed

local habitats, and was felt as far away as Japan. Not only did islanders become ill from radiation poisoning, but their homeland was forever altered by Western science.<sup>316</sup>

The case of Bikini Atoll is just one instance of the disastrous effects of nuclear testing, and as Rachel Carson's book noted, of the wider effects of unchecked scientific advancement on both the natural world and the human population. The case is made all the more poignant when we consider that it involves not only an ecological conflict (Western society against nature), but also a colonial confrontation (the U.S. against the indigenous Bikini islanders). The indigenous islanders were entirely reliant on their natural environment for sustenance, but their connection goes deeper than that. As shown when they were displaced, their very culture was built around the natural world. The Bikini islanders were fishers, predominantly, and the loss of the natural lagoon utterly altered their way of life. This same occurrence is seen repeatedly in cases of displacement, and in colonialist examples in which the colonising powers irrevocably alter the land, thus displacing the indigenous culture, even while they remain in their home environment. In his study of Peter Brook's production, Arthur Horowitz discusses the "correlation between Britain's angst and despair from World War II, [and] the demise of colonialism" as influences on the theatrical traditions of the 1950s, from which Brook would develop his spatialised experiments in the 1960s.<sup>317</sup> It was out of a world of colonial collapse, the Cold War, and the related effects of nuclear testing that Brook's production and *Forbidden Planet* grew.

Two aspects of Brook's production warrant particular attention before I direct my analysis to *Forbidden Planet*: the setting of the production (designed by Brook), and the characters of Prospero (John Gielgud), Ariel (Brian Bedford), and Caliban (Alec Clunes). The

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<sup>316</sup> <<http://www.bikinatoll.com>> accessed 27 May 2008.

<sup>317</sup> Arthur Horowitz, *Prospero's "True Preservers": Peter Brook, Yukio Ninagawa, and Giorgio Strehler – Twentieth Century Directors Approach Shakespeare's The Tempest* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) 54.

performance was located in a world that almost appeared under water (see appendix, figure twelve). One reviewer said, “Pale sea mists shroud Prospero’s art and the shimmering light from the water creeps into his cave.”<sup>318</sup> The set was dominated by blue and white lights, and the land was rocky. If not literally under the sea, this island was certainly carved by it. Another reviewer, in reaction to a setting that was not a fruitful isle, said, “Mr. Brook’s island is a strange jungle-grown place where the sun never penetrates and life seems to have the suspended motion of a realm under water.”<sup>319</sup> The stage did change shapes, with different rock formations signaling the locations of the play: from the open water of the shipwreck (signified by various ropes and ladders hanging from the flies), to the rocky island, to the small cell (a hole in the rock) in which Miranda and Ferdinand are discovered playing chess. Horowitz argues, “Despite the undercurrent of darkness and melancholy that pervaded the physical look of the production, this proved a rather straightforward and traditional approach to the play.”<sup>320</sup> We can see, however, that this gloomy, watery world matched the imagination of its time, with the horrors of Bikini Atoll fresh in the memory, but also with the collapse of many colonial projects occurring on islands in tropical locations. The political world of the time is reflected in the production, and the construction of the fictional island world is eco-poetically linked with its real-world influences.

While the reviewers saw the world as largely gloomy, the production photographs appear quite beautiful, clearly a place where my modified phenomenology of theatre performance is confronted with difficulties. The masque in this performance seemed to highlight the potential beauty and tranquility of this island location. Horowitz says, “The heightened joy and promise

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<sup>318</sup> A.D., “Tempest at Stratford Redolent of the Sea,” rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Peter Brook, *Oxford Mail* (14 Aug. 1957) np.

<sup>319</sup> W.A. Darling, “Masque Great Scene in ‘The Tempest.’” Rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Peter Brook, *Daily Telegraph* (14 Aug. 1957) np.

<sup>320</sup> Horowitz 55.



of the masque scene was manifested by the lighting and scenography of this stage picture; it was one of the few occasions in the production where there was any suggestion of open space or airiness upon Prospero's dark island."<sup>321</sup> Of course, the wedding masque staged by Prospero and his spirits is a bright feature of the play itself, with the conjured goddesses specifically referencing the bounties of nature and implicitly connecting the natural world with the human celebrants. During the masque, in a strategy that perhaps anticipates the repetitious use of Shakespeare's words in his 1968 Roundhouse adaptation of the play, the words "barns, garner, vines, plants" were repeated, almost as if they were an incantation.<sup>322</sup> These words, while certainly not evocative of the splendid natural imagery expressed by the goddesses during the masque, suggest that there would be more in the couple's married life than could be found in the barren and rocky world of the production. One reviewer noted the scene particularly, "The stage is filled with dancers celebrating the glories of the earth, and goddesses... seem to float through the air in their ectoplasmic gowns."<sup>323</sup> Despite the positive appearance of the goddesses, and the lightening of the mood during the masque, Brook's production remained largely dark throughout, and even presaged the view of Prospero as colonial tyrant that would dominate readings of the play throughout the 1960s.

Gielgud's Prospero was a strong, austere figure, though coupled with an element of subtle vulnerability that many reviewers found refreshing. Throughout the opening of the production, in his first meetings with all of the island's inhabitants (Ariel, Miranda, and Caliban), none of the characters were at eye level with Prospero. They all crouched or knelt so as to remain below his gaze, and, according to the prompt-book, when Gielgud sat down during the

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<sup>321</sup> Horowitz 58.

<sup>322</sup> Dir. Peter Brook, Prompt-Book, *The Tempest*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, opening 13 Aug. 1957, Royal Shakespeare Company Archives, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

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long exposition of act one, scene two, Doreen Aris's Miranda was compelled to kneel on the ground to remain below him. Horowitz says of him,

It was this combination of anger, relief, guilt, and fear that were most intriguing in trying to resolve whether Gielgud's Prospero was some kind of cold-war icon. Was he intended to be the representation of a modern potentate, awesome with nuclear power while despairing over the necessity for having to wield such mighty weaponry?<sup>324</sup>

We might question whether U.S. government officials really despaired over the destruction of Bikini Atoll during their nuclear testing, but Horowitz's point makes it clear that Gielgud's Prospero, with an added undercurrent of regret, was certainly reminiscent of the political figures of the time in his wielding of power. Nowhere is this power more clear than in relation to his two servants, Ariel and Caliban.

Brian Bedford's Ariel was stronger and more physically solid than most envisioned for the airy spirit (see appendix, figure thirteen). While he was a graceful actor, one reviewer sensed that he was "some kind of relation to Caliban" because of the apparent physicality he brought to the role.<sup>325</sup> Despite this perceived connectedness between them, however, the two characters were vastly different. Bedford's Ariel, while certainly stronger and less sprightly than the reviewers were accustomed to, maintained airiness in both physicality and costume. His blue, flowing outfit suggested that he was perhaps a spirit of the water, rather than the air, in this production, fitting with the overall setting of the performance. Whether of the air or of the water, it was clear that Ariel maintained his elemental connection to this world. Caliban, likewise was connected to the environment, though he seemed more a creature of the elemental ooze of the sea-bed (see appendix, figure fourteen). His costuming was grotesque, half-ape and half-fish, and Horowitz describes him as "a mud-laden, earth-grounded monster."<sup>326</sup> The main difference

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<sup>324</sup> Horowitz 60-61.

<sup>325</sup> Darling np.

<sup>326</sup> Horowitz 58.

between the two, however, was not in the way they connected to the world of the production, but in how they were treated by Prospero. Ariel, while not quite an equal, was certainly involved in Prospero's schemes, not human but nearly on par with the magician. Caliban, on the other hand was definitively a slave, a fact enhanced by Clunes's lounging, slouching, almost disaffected physicality. In act one, scene two, as he said "Oh would it had happened" (349), Caliban rushed at Miranda in a repeat of his sexual advance. Gielgud's Prospero responded by whipping him into submission, clearly a moment reminiscent of the colonial encounter between masters and slaves.

In the end, Brook's production began to problematise the issues such as colonialism and indigenous land rights that have since dominated critical and performative approaches to the play, but did not take them to an extreme. It was a more mainstream production, one that challenged the audience up to a point, but did not push them into self-confrontation as his *King Lear* did. However, the performance was acutely attuned to the world in which it was born, and with which it interacted. Gielgud's rejection of his magic was filled with a sense of his connection to the natural world, as Horowitz notes, "Prospero's epiphany was that of a scientist who has learned that man has controlled nature only when he has ceased doing battle with it."<sup>327</sup> This connection between the magician and nature was as tenuous as the scientists who were willing to subordinate the natural world and indigenous populations in order to test nuclear devices. But while the production maintained its connections to the real world, it also created a fictional world that expressed the ways in which *The Tempest* can be seen in ecopoetic terms. The review in *Stage* noted that the production was "so magical in atmosphere, with elements so strange and imaginative, that one easily believes the island is naturally peopled by such beings as Caliban and Prospero," before concluding that this island existed "somewhere between fantasy

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<sup>327</sup> Horowitz 60.

and reality.”<sup>328</sup> What these final comments on the world suggest is that, in ecopoetic terms, the world existed within a framework that relied on the real but revealed itself in a fictional otherworldly way. This is the same pattern that I see emerging in *Forbidden Planet*.

Before delving into a direct reading of the film, I must address the disputed claim of *Forbidden Planet*’s indebtedness to *The Tempest*. It has been noted by several critics that neither the story writers (Irving Block and Allen Adler), nor the screenwriter (Cyril Hume), nor the film’s director Fred McLeod Wilcox acknowledged Shakespeare’s play as inspiration for *Forbidden Planet*. Judith Buchanan notes that neither the artistic team nor any of the film’s initial critics recognised a connection between it and Shakespeare’s play.<sup>329</sup> However, one original reviewer, Moira Walsh in *America*, drew clear lines of comparison between Shakespeare’s play and the film’s story, its central themes, and even some of the characters.<sup>330</sup> Nevertheless, the vast majority of the film’s initial reviews made no mention of Shakespeare. Two decades after the film’s release, Steve Rubin featured it in his recurring series in the magazine *Cinefantastique*. For the retrospective study, Rubin interviewed many surviving members of *Forbidden Planet*’s production team, and he concluded that *The Tempest* was “[story writer Irving] Block’s favorite play, and at the time he saw in it the opportunity to add a fresh angle to the repetitive and stagnating science fiction film genre.”<sup>331</sup> Whether Rubin’s claim is accurate is impossible to determine. Despite the perceived lack of authorial intent in adapting *The Tempest*, *Forbidden Planet* is widely read as an adaptation, and frequently viewed in discourse with Shakespeare’s play.

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<sup>328</sup> R.B.M. np.

<sup>329</sup> Judith Buchanan, “*Forbidden Planet* and the Retrospective Attribution of Intentions,” *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*, eds. Deborah Carmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan (London and Stirling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001) 150.

<sup>330</sup> Moira Walsh, rev. of *Forbidden Planet*, dir. Fred McLeod Wilcox, *America* 94 (31 March 1956) 724.

<sup>331</sup> Steve Rubin, “Retrospect: *Forbidden Planet*,” *Cinefantastique* 4.1 (1975) 7.

Despite her claim that there was no intended indebtedness, Buchanan follows poststructuralist critics in concluding that “an interpretive reading of a work of art should not be limited by consciously acknowledged authorial intentions since that work may legitimately live beyond these in ways not anticipated at its moment of composition.”<sup>332</sup> The issue goes further than Buchanan’s view, as individual interpreters may see different things in a single work, or even in a single moment within the work. So while intention, authorial or directorial, can help guide a retrospective critical analysis, so can accounts of audience responses (usually reviews). Of course, neither is absolutely necessary when engaging in interpretive analysis, as the latter-day critic’s own readings are of primary importance. For *Forbidden Planet*, a large enough body of literature has developed accepting its connections to *The Tempest*, and more is being written attempting to uncover further interplay between the two. I see the possible lack of an intentional indebtedness as largely irrelevant. Previous critics have established and accepted that *Forbidden Planet* is in some ways adaptive of *The Tempest*, and my own analysis may further an understanding of the film in relation to Shakespeare’s play.

*Forbidden Planet* begins with a starscape, the image of deep space as it was conceived in 1956, through which a “flying saucer” spaceship flies. In voice over, we are told that this is the future, and that humans have mastered interstellar travel. Unlike Prospero’s expository commentary to his daughter in *The Tempest* (1.2), this narrative only comments on the general history of humankind rather than introducing the specific characters of the film. The narrative concludes, “And so at last, mankind began the conquest and colonization of deep space.” This opening serves to theatricalise the film, to set it up as a story, distancing the audience from the fictional world while still grabbing their attention in narrative terms. This is problematic because the movie, utilising one of the main strategies of the science fiction genre, actually dramatises

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<sup>332</sup> Buchanan 154.

the contemporary problems of its time, changing the temporal and geographic setting in order to maintain a fictionalised stance on these problems. In this way, the film mediates between the concerns of Shakespeare's play, and the concerns of the world in 1956, and moves them both one step further away by setting the film in the future and in outerspace. This method of distancing may provide an audience with the ability to critically view the fictional screen story, but it may also blind them to connections with the concerns of their own world. After all, this was meant to be a popular film, not an art-house commentary on the troubles of 1956 America. Viewing the film from today can alleviate the schisms created by strategic distancing, as well as identify more connecting points between Shakespeare's play and the film.

As part of the strategy to understand both the distancing of the film's story from the audience's reality, and to unravel the ways in which the film engages with the issues of its time, numerous critics engage in a cultural-historical reading of the film. As Robert Willson theorises:

Many a lesson about tampering with nature's secrets or attempting to steal the secrets of lost civilizations can be found in [science fiction] literature and films. The ending, though, also relates to the historical period in which the film was produced. Just as paranoia about space invaders was particularly intense in 1956, so too was fear about Russians and the bomb... The image of Altair-4 vaporizing before our eyes can be understood as a warning about Earth's fate.<sup>333</sup>

Though the film was released prior to the previously acknowledged birth of modern environmentalism (1962 and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, see chapter three), many argue that the concerns of the 1960s, especially in relation to the environment, were already prevalent in the 1950s. Tim Youngs summarises this saying that one of the science fiction genre's main themes is concern over technological advancement. He argues that this is evident in "the ambivalence resulting from a widespread feeling that material benefits have been obtained at the cost of a

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<sup>333</sup> Robert F. Willson, Jr., *Shakespeare in Hollywood 1929-1956* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Press, 2000) 107.

connectedness with nature.”<sup>334</sup> However, while we can read into the film from our current attitude of ecological awareness and environmental action, we must be careful to recognise that while *Forbidden Planet* may have some of these issues and tensions at its core, the film does not confront them in any positive manner. In his cultural study of the 1950s, Peter Biskin draws a broad picture of political, cultural, religious, and even environmental ideologies in the decade. Examining the emergence of these principles in popular culture of the time, he summarises the prevailing attitude thus: “That which is not-culture is, most generally, nature – not merely trees, animals, and bugs, but all that is not human – so that the conflict between moderates and extremists, the center and the Other, Us and Them, was often presented as a conflict between nature and culture.”<sup>335</sup> While *Forbidden Planet* may dramatise this conflict, and while we may re-read it from the perspective of the “extreme, Other, Them, nature” side of Biskin’s formula, the film remains a product of the moderate, dominant side of culture. It is in deconstructing that dominant paradigm that viewing this film becomes important.

The commentaries on *Forbidden Planet* have brought distinctly environmental language to their critiques of the film. It is interesting to note that these studies come from the worlds of Shakespeareana, popular culture critiques, and film studies. None of them have ecological criticism directly in mind when looking at the film. This suggests that in this updating of Shakespeare’s original for a science fiction film treatment, the critics have discerned a connection between the film’s generic parameters and Shakespeare’s original in terms of their treatments of environmental issues. Much has been made particularly of the similarities of Altair IV and Prospero’s island. Both are remote, isolated, and have eerie aspects (the airs of

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<sup>334</sup> Tim Youngs, “Cruising against the Id: The Transformation of Caliban in *Forbidden Planet*,” *Constellation Caliban: Figurations of a Character*, eds. Nadia Lie and Theo D’haen (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997) 223.

<sup>335</sup> Peter Biskin, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1983) 106.

Shakespeare's original and the decidedly more sinister noises of the science fiction planet). Altair IV also has an implaced population and travelers who arrive, though the intentions of both groups are distinct from Shakespeare's original. The environment of the film is discussed more later in this chapter, but it is important to acknowledge here that many critics argue that both *Forbidden Planet* and *The Tempest* engage in some ways with the pastoral tradition. Darko Suvin argues that science fiction is a genre whose "necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative alternative to the author's [or audience's] empirical experience."<sup>336</sup> The processes of estrangement and cognition, especially when placed in a foreign or alternate reality, are similar to the processes of escape and return that define pastoral works. The retreat and return paradigm of pastoralism is clearly evident in the play and the film, though the latter is forced to be more specific in its world than older pastoral works, which left the place of retreat intentionally vague.

Another aspect of modern critical commentary that engages with the film is post-colonialism. The voice-over induction to *Forbidden Planet* suggests that human forays into deep space are not without colonial confrontation as it says that the process of interstellar exploration is one of "conquest and colonization." It is interesting here that the issue of non-human life is left ambiguous in the film's final edit. In a deleted scene recovered in the special features of *Forbidden Planet*'s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary DVD edition, Captain Adams (Leslie Nielsen) and another crew member observe the lack of life on Altair IV. Adams wonders aloud if the colonisers of the earlier Bellerophon mission to the planet were the first people to encounter extraterrestrial life. This conversation was relegated to the cutting-room floor in the theatrical edit, leaving the issue

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<sup>336</sup> Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979) 98.



of colonial conquest ambiguous. If no extraterrestrial life is ever encountered, however, we must wonder why space exploration is described as a process of “conquest” as stated by the introduction. The answer must be that the colonial confrontation occurs not between explorers and indigenous populations, but between the colonisers and the worlds they encounter, the various incarnations of nature. One of the primary strands of thinking that links ecocriticism and postcolonialism is the idea of liberation, setting free the oppressed from the colonising force. *Forbidden Planet* never fully engages with this, thus, nowhere in the film does this ideology become problematic, another piece of evidence that this film is from the dominant, cultured Western paradigm. Nevertheless, the postcolonial-ecocritical link will continue to be important, and is vital to the next chapter of this thesis.

The lack of alien (or indigenous) life is an important aspect of the adaptive process. We do encounter the remnants of an ancient civilization, presumably native to Altair IV, and their cultural artifacts are important to the film’s story, but there is never a colonial confrontation between the human travelers and indigenous peoples. Sara Martin says,

It is clear that *Forbidden Planet* finds in Shakespeare much that is relevant to the time when it was made, dramatising fears of post-WWII American and, by extension, Western culture. This is the unfairness of colonial exploitation, not even the fear of the Other which most invasion films dramatized, but a deeper fear that we all recognise: the fear that Caliban is both us and the technology that surrounds us.<sup>337</sup>

The film does not encounter any indigenous alien populations, per se, but it does internalise the fear that Martin mentions. This is a product of the film’s other main source material, Freudian psychoanalysis. Rather than being threatened from without, the characters of the film, particularly Dr. Morbius (Walter Pidgeon) as the Prospero character, are their own worst enemies. Of course, if the colonial encounter can be envisioned as occurring between the

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<sup>337</sup> Sara Martin, “Classic Shakespeare for All: *Forbidden Planet* and *Prospero’s Books*, Two Screen Adaptations of *The Tempest*,” *Classics in Film and Fiction*, eds. Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye, and Imelda Whelehan (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000) 43.

colonizers and the planet (which is, after all, the object of their colonial impulse), then we see a different picture emerge. The stakes of the film may superficially be the human psyche and maintaining control over the civilised mind, but it is not humanity that suffers the consequences of this struggle, but the planet itself. In this linkage of the postcolonial and ecocritical ideologies, it is the planet that suffers the fate usually reserved for indigenous populations: annihilation. Nowhere does the film confront this issue, and while Morbius's daughter Alta (Anne Francis) seems to mourn the loss of her home, the other characters seem to accept the planet's fate as the natural outcome of human scientific hubris. In the next chapter, Césaire's play *Une Tempête* provides an alternate vision of the human-nature colonial encounter.

It is now necessary to examine the film in more ecopoetic terms, examining its world, specific characters, and the ideas of implacement/displacement that are so vital to both the ecocritical and post-colonial projects. The film begins with a crew of interstellar travelers led by Captain Adams on a rescue mission to the distant planet Altair IV. Their goal is to determine if there are any survivors from the first trip to the planet, a colonisation mission known as Bellerophon. The "storm" in this adaptation is the deceleration from light speed that leaves the rescue crew woozy and tired. From near orbit, the planet looks grey and desolate, though it is described as "earth-like." One of the mission's crewmen, upon seeing Altair IV through the ship's porthole, observes, "The Lord sure makes some beautiful worlds." To a modern audience, this seems contradictory. Surely, there are "beautiful worlds," but the almost colourless Altair IV cannot be one of them. In order to understand this, we must consider the cultural moment in which *Forbidden Planet* was produced. At this point, in 1956, the world had yet to see the first colour photograph of our own planet from space. The iconic image of the "earth rise" as it was viewed on Christmas 1968 by the Apollo 8 astronauts orbiting the moon did not appear until

1969 (see appendix, figure fifteen). So the images of an alien world in the film were completely conjured from the imagination of the artistic team (see appendix, figure sixteen).

In an interview with Steve Rubin in 1975, special effects crewman Arnold Gillespie commented, “MGM had never made a science fiction film. This gave us a chance to create a new world outside our own solar system.”<sup>338</sup> Gillespie goes on to note the fervour with which the artistic and special effects team approached this opportunity, and the detail that went into creating Altair IV for the screen. His comments go to the heart of the appreciative nature of science fiction world creation: the sense of wonder inherent in the ecopoetic project. Simone Caroti notes that this wondrous sense “is the cornerstone of all good science fiction,” and claims that wonder is definitely evident in *Forbidden Planet* “greatly enriched in its scope and meaning by an intelligent use of several of *The Tempest*’s main themes.”<sup>339</sup> The sense of wonder is most evident in the aforementioned crewman’s reactions to Altair IV, and reveals further connections between the planet and Shakespeare’s island. Both are remote places, largely unsettled (there is “no sign of civilization” on Altair IV), and most importantly, both confound definition in terms of bounty, beauty, and necessity. Once they land on Altair IV, the crewmen gaze around at the terrain seemingly in awe of its beauty. What they see is a rocky, dusty, desolate terrain framed by an alien sky of green and black (see appendix, figure seventeen). In *The Tempest*, Gonzalo finds that the island has “everything advantageous to life,” while Antonio responds, “True, save means to live” (2.1.52-53).<sup>340</sup> In a way, this is the power of the unknown. Neither Captain Adams’s crew, nor Shakespeare’s shipwrecked nobles know anything of their newfound habitats,

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<sup>338</sup> Rubin 7.

<sup>339</sup> Simone Caroti, “Science Fiction, *Forbidden Planet*, and Shakespeare *The Tempest*,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: a WWWeb Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 2004), <<http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb04-1/caroti04.html>>.

<sup>340</sup> All quotes are from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, third Arden Series (London: Thomson Learning, 1999).

and there is awe and wonder in experiencing something new. This sense of wonder, the valuing of the land for its own sake, rather than for its usefulness, suggests an acceptance of one's surroundings. The idea of dwelling in the environment, of ecopoetics, is rooted in this sensation found in both *Forbidden Planet* and *The Tempest*.

Gonzalo's wonder at his new environment inspires an impulse for a utopian project on the island. Once he has concluded that the island has everything necessary for life, he launches into his commentary on the new "Golden Age" that he would establish on the island (beginning at 2.1.148). His utopian vision concludes,

All things in common nature should produce  
Without sweat or endeavour; treason, felony,  
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine  
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth  
Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,  
To feed my innocent people. (2.1.160-165)

His project is not unlike that of Morbius. As mentioned earlier, Morbius (identified as a philologist in the film) arrived on Altair IV twenty years before the beginning of the film. The other members of the colonial mission called Bellerophon died mysteriously within the first year on the planet, but he survived because of his "special love" for the world. In the intervening two decades, he set up a utopian life on the planet with his daughter, Altaira or Alta (see appendix, figure eighteen). They live in much the same way that Lear desires to live with Cordelia, as "two birds i'th' cage." Their only other companion is Robby the Robot (a conglomeration of Ariel and Caliban), a technological wonder who serves his masters willingly. It is interesting to note that the original mission to Altair IV was named after the mythical Greek hero who slew the Chimera. In order to accomplish this feat, Bellerophon tamed the wild winged horse Pegasus. Perhaps this is merely a classical reference to appeal to intellectuals in the popular audience, but it may also be suggestive of the fact that the colonising mission had at its core the taming of a

natural world. To this day, “chimera” and “chimerical” often “describe anything that is wildly fanciful or absurd.”<sup>341</sup> Perhaps the notion of conquering the natural world is absurd, or perhaps it is the utopian venture of the colonial mission that is fantastical. In whatever sense it is meant, it is clear that the Bellerophon mission failed.

Perhaps the only successful aspect of the utopian project in the film is evidenced by Alta, whose very name suggests a close relationship with the planet. She represents a certain sense of harmony with the natural world: she is innocently unaware of the indigenous Krell technology that her father experiments with, and she seems to spend most of her time in her lush garden, scantily clad, playing with her “friends,” two deer and a tiger. It has been noted that Alta’s little corner of Altair IV is akin to an edenic paradise. Chantal Zabus says, “Alta is a pastoral Eve-figure inhabiting a pre-lapsarian landscape, in which all the tame animals – deer and tigers alike – are her ‘friends,’ very much like Miranda.”<sup>342</sup> While the innocence of Alta and Miranda may be similar, there is no suggestion in *The Tempest* that Miranda befriends wild animals. It must be noted as well that Alta’s relationship with the animals is not the only strangeness in this garden: the animals live together in seeming harmony. Deer would be a natural prey for a tiger, yet they coexist peacefully. Biskin notes, “Alta’s Garden of Eden is a utopia in its natural form – an arcadia. She lives in perfect harmony with the beasts of the jungle.”<sup>343</sup> There is an insipid surrealism occurring here, however. The fact that Alta lives peacefully with her “friends” may make her seem like a pre-Fall Eve figure, but the fact that the animals live harmoniously together is simply unnatural outside the biblical sphere. There is no doubt that Alta’s life in the garden suggests her close ties with the planet and with the more earthly creatures of the garden, thus tying her to nature in the familiar nature equals feminine, culture equals masculine formula.

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<sup>341</sup> “Chimera,” *The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (New York: World Book, 1988) 471.

<sup>342</sup> Chantal Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) 190.

<sup>343</sup> Biskin 113.

Nevertheless, there is something all too artificial about the relationship between the animals. Had there not been a natural predator in the garden, the Alta-nature connection would be unquestionably clear, but the tiger's presence and lack of predatory instincts makes the garden seem manufactured. One thing is clear: Alta, like her father, is at home on this planet, implaced as it were, however temporarily or imperfectly.

Alta's power over the animals is unique among the film's human characters. When Adams and Dr. Ostrow (Warren Stevens) observe her interacting with the tiger, Morbius says, "Outside of the range of my daughter's influence, he's still a deadly wild beast." This clearly sets Alta apart as having a unique contact with the non-human animals that live in her garden. Dr. Ostrow posits two explanations for this, but both only exist as deleted scenes, so the theatrical release left her power unexplained. The first explanation relates to the myth of the unicorn, and is prompted by Morbius, clearly his paternally-approved theory. Ostrow explains that the wild and untamed unicorn worshipped purity, and could be tamed by a true maiden. Later, away from Morbius, Ostrow and Adams discuss Alta in another deleted scene. Ostrow brings the unicorn myth under the auspices of science, suggesting that an exceptional mind in the body of a sexually unawakened woman could send out certain electro-chemical waves soothing to a wild animal. He says that many ancient myths have their basis in scientific fact, and this could explain Alta. This is another example of how the film finds ways to "culture" otherwise "natural" occurrences. Ostrow's explanations are left out of the final edit, meaning that no audience knew of them until 2006. Nevertheless, they feed into the later moment in the film when Alta's subjugation to the masculine, or culture, ends her feminised relationship with nature.

Of course, the tiger's presence in the alien arcadia is a necessary element of the plot as it relates to Alta's sexual awakening. She flirts with various crew members, and even plays an

innocent game of “kissing practice” with one of them. Her flirtation is enough to prompt Adams to command her to dress more conservatively around the crewmen. The tension created by his desire to control Alta’s sexuality, and her desire for innocent love games eventually leads to their romantic entanglement. Alta demonstrates her willingness to be subjugated by the cultured masculine project when she alters her natural dress to please Adams. Their romantic engagement begins, and is sealed with a passionate kiss in the garden. At this point, she sees her “friend” the tiger, but the animal no longer seems to recognise her. Finally grasping its predatory instincts (but still oblivious to the deer) the tiger leaps at Alta, forcing Adams to “disintegrate” it with his gun (see appendix, figure nineteen). In the context of centrist culture efforts to regulate behaviour, Biskin argues that Alta’s “innocent intercourse with the natural world is exposed as parochial and limited, and when it ends we don’t mourn it, because now it feels artificial, even ‘unnatural,’ which is to say, nature has been redefined as culture.”<sup>344</sup> As I noted before, the Alta-nature relationship was never free of a certain level of artificiality, but it is clear that Biskin is suggesting the enculturation of a formerly naturally-implaced woman. Again, we can read this instance as a Christian allegory for Eve’s fall from grace. Biskin goes on to use *Forbidden Planet* as an example of centrist films of its day which “feared the eruption of nature within culture and were therefore afraid of sex and mistrusted women, particularly sexual women.”<sup>345</sup> So it is only once Alta is dis-implaced, once she has been alienated from the planet that she considers home through a sexual awakening, that she can become enculturated amongst the male-dominated society of Adams’s crew. Her natural sexuality, once controlled by a “good strong man,” is no longer a threat to the hierarchical domain to which she must submit, but it comes at the price of losing her connection with her natural “friends.”

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<sup>344</sup> Biskin 113.

<sup>345</sup> Biskin 133.

Obviously, this is a problematic formulation. If sex is “natural” and must be controlled, especially female sexuality, then why would Alta lose her connections to the animal-friends (beings-in-nature) through her sexual awakening? Of course, the animals are not exactly “in-nature,” as evidenced by their unnatural relationship with each other, and the fact that they are not in their normal surroundings. These animals are more like zoo specimens than wild creatures, regardless of Morbius’s comment. If Biskin’s formulation is correct, and if *Forbidden Planet* was a centrist film meant to uphold the dominant male=culture, female=nature paradigm of the era, then the answer to these questions must be discovered where nature and culture collide. Clearly, Alta’s interaction with Adams (feminine-nature – masculine-culture) is one manifestation of the nature-culture relationship. The other manifestation, and the most important throughout the science fiction genre, is human interaction with technology. Technology in many ways represents the epitome of culture, the ways in which it conquers nature, the farthest reaches of humanity’s (mostly *man*’s) power. In science fiction, technology is often the cause of humanity’s ultimate fall. Sometimes, this manifests itself in the proliferation of innovative new weapons which are ultimately turned against the human creator. In other works, a new life form arises, often out of the cast-off mire of civilisation (i.e. pollution and toxic waste), and returns to reap vengeance upon its unknowing progenitors. Often, however, science fiction is cleverer in its fear and mistrust of technology, allowing it to become as human as possible before it turns against humanity. In this manifestation, the trope becomes self-reflexive, identifying humankind’s own self-destructive impulses in its cultural artifacts. It is in this vein that *Forbidden Planet* treats technology.

There are two examples of technological development in the film that must be examined. The first is the humanoid machine, Robbie the Robot. He is an example of a benign form of



technological innovation, a household servant (Ariel) with a mischievous streak (Caliban) who is ultimately governed by Isaac Asimov's laws of robotics, meaning that despite his awesome strength and unfathomable intellectual abilities, he is forever incapable of harming a human being. Harlan Kennedy notes,

On *Planet's* ladder of evolution he's Caliban-and-Ariel, given a free passcard to shin up and down rungs. He gets drunk Caliban-style with the (space)ship's cook (Earl Holliman); but Ariel-like he does his master's higher bidding and can flit into mental-arithmetical stratospheres at the touch of a button. Robbie personifies Prospero's magic. He's a creature made from raw resources, but transfigured by the sophisticated programmings of civilization.<sup>346</sup>

Robbie is designed to serve humanity, and while this along with other similarities in plot points may make him a distant cousin of Ariel and Caliban, he remains distinct from them for one important reason: he is incapable of independence. Robbie does not crave freedom, as both Ariel and Caliban do; he would be without purpose on his own, apart from human masters. He is created (in the sense of *poiesis*) to serve, not forced to serve, and when coupled with the laws governing robotic entities, it is impossible for him to be a threat to the human population. In ecopoetic terms, Robbie may be constructed of natural material, but his environment would be incomplete without people, he is purely a cultural construct.

Robbie is set in stark contrast, however, to the aforementioned Krell technology of Altair IV. The Krell were the original inhabitants of the planet, and they mysteriously vanished one day, leaving behind all their extraordinary technical gadgets. Morbius discovered the Krell technology and spent his time on the planet secretly experimenting with their machines, akin to Prospero studying his magic books. Primary amongst the Krell's "magical" machines is an amplifier for boosting one's intellect, and it is his repeated use of this machine that gives Morbius perceptual powers beyond the normal humans. Unlike Prospero, however, Morbius is

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<sup>346</sup> Harlan Kennedy, "Prospero's Flicks," *Film Comment* (January-February 1992) 47.

unable to control the actions of his visitors, and is not aware of the full extent of his powers. Of course, it is his own intellect, boosted by the Krell technology, that manifests itself as the “id-monster” that wreaks havoc on the crew and killed the members of Morbius’s own original expedition. It is discovered that the Krell destroyed one another in a similar fashion, unleashing their own uncontrollable, “animal” impulses on one another. The Krell are described by Morbius as having “unlocked the mysteries of nature,” and the id-monster that is released by their technology is called “the beast, the mindless primitive.” Kennedy compares the film to science fiction novels such as Huxley’s *Brave New World* (itself indebted to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* for its title) and Orwell’s *1984* saying, “The movie sees scientific empire-building as the potential Fall in our earthly Eden.”<sup>347</sup> Zabus agrees, saying, “If the Monster’s appearance is rather conventional, what it seeks to express in its limitless energy and blind perspective, is the anxiety about the potential abuse of technological power.”<sup>348</sup> These readings suggest that the id-monster is a manifestation of overly zealous technophilia, which can result in human self-destruction. So it takes the civilised mind and the production techniques of culture to create technology that can release the mindless savage within humankind.

Of course, this is not the same sort of destruction that occurs in other science fiction films and literature, in which technology is literally turned against its human masters. Rather, the Krell technology unleashes a power that is inside the masters, something preexisting. As Biskin concludes,

Despite the dire consequences of technological development – the transformation of Morbius’s own id into the dread planetary force – here there is nothing essentially wrong with machines. No, the trouble isn’t with microchips and semiconductors. In *Forbidden Planet*, people betray technology, nature betrays culture.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Kennedy 47.

<sup>348</sup> Zabus 187.

<sup>349</sup> Biskin 109.

The science fiction paradigm is flipped on its head, and while there is still a latent warning against technological overreach, the fear as it is expressed in *Forbidden Planet* is that there is something wrong with how humans wield technological power. The Krell technology is another example of how *Forbidden Planet* upholds the dominant ideologies of its cultural moment, while flirting with ambiguous and problematised configurations. Like Alta's sexuality, which still requires her assimilation into masculine culture but does not create an absolute opposition between culture and nature, the Krell technology is cultural, but not directly opposed to nature.

It may be difficult to see how *Forbidden Planet* can be reconciled to a positive environmental view. In fact, it may be impossible. The point, of course, is not to suggest that every work has something positive to say, it may very well be that we can learn more about our interactions with the natural world by dwelling on those cultural artifacts that show humans at our anthropocentric worst. Nevertheless, there are some positive aspects of the film, many of which have already been noted, that warrant summation. The first is the idea of wonder that is at the core of the film and the entirety of science fiction as a genre. This sense extends beyond the characters of the cinematic world as well, into the world of the audience. As Dennis Muren, a contemporary special effects artist, notes, "It was the first [science fiction] film...where you really were immersed in this other world, without compromises."<sup>350</sup> Much as the crewmen gaze admiringly at the alien terrain around them, the audience experiences a new world for the first time. The attentiveness to detail, the scope of the landscapes of Altair IV, even the distant view of the planet are all impeccably created for the film. While the film's content may not endorse anything even close to an ecological perspective, the artistic process was certainly, if not intentionally, ecopoetic.

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<sup>350</sup> *Amazing!: Exploring the Far Reaches of Forbidden Planet*, DVD, Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2006.

The implacement of the two main characters, Morbius and Alta, is also an important aspect of the film. Apart from maybe Robbie, who is literally made of the elements of Altair IV, they are the closest thing to an indigenous population left on the planet. Morbius claims that it is his special love for the planet that protects him and his daughter from the id monster, but it is clear that only Alta harbors this love. In his article arguing that the id monster is in fact an adaptation of Caliban, Tim Youngs claims,

[Leo] Marx's terms are revealing of a certain tradition in a way that perhaps he did not intend: the setting can hardly be 'remote' or 'newly discovered' to its indigenous population. The identification of raw nature is not an uncomplicated perception but an ideological construction dependent upon civilization's idea of itself.<sup>351</sup>

He is referring here to the chapter on *The Tempest* in Marx's landmark and proto-ecocritical work, *The Machine in the Garden*. Of course, Marx was attempting to reconcile the pastoral form with Shakespeare's work and with his own environmental ideology, and his work is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The specific passage that Youngs references is regarding *The Tempest* and its place in the pastoral tradition, and it warrants some attention here:

I am thinking of the remote setting, the strong sense of place and its hold on the mind, the hero's struggle with raw nature on the one hand and the corruption within his own civilization on the other, and, finally, his impulse to effect a general reconciliation between the forces of civilization and nature.<sup>352</sup>

While there is no indigenous population in *Forbidden Planet*, Youngs has touched on the fact that Morbius at least has lost his sense of awe and wonder for Altair IV. Perhaps this is the cause of his downfall, and it is Alta's innocent sense of wonder that keeps her not only safe on the planet, but safe from the self-destructive influences that beset her father.

Certainly the scale of the battle becomes ecological in the end. While it may seem that it is Morbius's mind or soul that is at stake in his control of the Krell technology and hence the id

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<sup>351</sup> Youngs 212.

<sup>352</sup> Marx 35.

monster, it becomes the entire planet that will suffer as a result of his tampering with the alien (or indigenous?) technology. Perhaps, in Lovelock's Gaian terms, the id monster was the planet's path of self-preservation against the impulses of the Krell that would eventually put the health of the whole planet at risk, as Morbius does. Willson notes that the adaptive process maintains some parallels and some departures. Toward the conclusion, he compares Adams's actions with those of Ferdinand, who enculturates his betrothal to Miranda by asking for his father's belated blessing, thus making his individual impulse a matter for the society at large, and considering that he is heir to the throne, it is a very important matter for the gathered nobility. However, Willson notes that there is an adaptive departure in the figures of Prospero and Morbius at the same moment:

A nice equivalence exists in this formula as Adams acts to save the planet *and* his beloved, nicely balancing communal and personal values. While Prospero must embrace forgiveness ("The rarer action is In virtue than in vengeance"), however, Morbius must embrace "this thing of darkness" – his destructive id – to save his daughter and the brave voyagers come to rescue him.<sup>353</sup>

Of course, it is not just that Morbius must embrace and recognise his own destructive subconscious, but that he must give up his power, relinquish his control over the Krell technology, in order to save his daughter. This he just manages to do, but the struggle kills him, and the decision is made that in order to save humanity from itself, the Krell technology must be destroyed, which means destroying the planet.

At the end of the film, as Robbie pilots Adams, Alta, and the surviving crewmen away from Altair IV, the characters gaze back through their porthole to watch as the planet is consumed in a blue explosion (see appendix, figure twenty). Adams notes that Morbius's name will live on as a warning, and his sacrifice may save humanity when they reach the same level of evolution that the Krell achieved. Of course, in *Forbidden Planet* the problem of human nature

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<sup>353</sup> Willson 106.

yielded the worst of consequences: it required the sacrifice of an entire planet in order to control the suicidal impulses of human nature. While the film's main content may fail to register on the environmental scale, this final comment certainly must. Humanity may not have reached the evolutionary stage of the Krell, but humanity certainly has the capability for self-destruction, and planetary decimation as well. This warning against self-destruction may be *Forbidden Planet's* enduring legacy. However, destruction is not the only aspect of the film that has important ramifications. The creation of the alien planet, the ecopoetic process, yielded a new way of experiencing a science fiction world. And the film's adaptive process gave a new life to *The Tempest*, contributing to the play's enduring place in the modern world and critical dialogue. However, as in Brook's production, it did not develop its world in a way that directly confronted the environmental issues that are latent in Shakespeare's text. The colonial encounter, as far as it exists, is unfronted, and the issue of land rights and indigenous population is largely overlooked in both of these performance works. Nevertheless, the project of expanding Shakespeare's play into the discursive contexts of the modern world had begun, and would be continued further in the work of post-colonial appropriations of *The Tempest*.

## Chapter 6:

### Postcolonial Ecology: Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*

Brook's 1957 production of *The Tempest* and the film *Forbidden Planet* both contained hints of the play's own colonial confrontation, but neither directly engaged with the issues of colonialism. It was in the 1960s that post-colonial ideology really took hold in regards to Shakespeare's play, and only in this decade did post-colonialism begin to influence performances of *The Tempest*. In this chapter, I focus on Aimé Césaire's racialised and post-colonial adaptation of the play *Une Tempête*. In my reading, I focus on Césaire's insistence on indigenous land rights as a part of the colonial discourse, and the interaction between the colonised (Caliban and Ariel) and Prospero to reveal how the issue of land is intimately tied to the colonial discourse. Thus, I argue, ecopoetics are engaged with post-colonialism, and the two, as critical disciplines, have a great deal to offer one another. As part of this argument, I first introduce post-colonial engagement with *The Tempest*, and discuss Césaire's own place within this movement. I then look at Peter Brook's experimental version of *The Tempest*, staged at London's Roundhouse theatre in 1968. This introductory material sets out the ways in which post-colonial ideology can be enhanced by ecopoetics, and, once established, I turn this critical apparatus to a viewing of Césaire's play. Unfortunately, Césaire's play has a patchy and inconsistent performance history, and has had only one professional treatment in Britain. Accounts and reviews of performances are few and far between. For this reason, I compare and contrast two separate performances of the play: the original performance (in Tunis in 1969 and Paris in 1970),<sup>354</sup> and the Gate Theatre production (1998) in London.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Dir. Jean-Marie Serreau, *Une Tempête* by Aimé Césaire, the International Festival, Hammamet, Tunisia, summer 1969; touring to Cité Universitaire, the University of Paris, Jan. 1970.

Césaire was born in Martinique, a French colonial holding in the Caribbean, and educated in Paris. In Paris, he connected with various other displaced black minorities, including Léopold Sédar Senghor, who would later become the political leader of Senegal. Césaire and Senghor together were the first practicing proponents of *négritude*, a term which Césaire coined and Senghor turned into a critical ideology. According to Lawrence Buell, who argues that *négritude* is inherently tied to ecological discourse,

Négritude, defined by Léopold Senghor, its first theorist, as “the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African world,” and more specifically “the communal warmth, the image-symbol and the cosmic rhythm which instead of dividing and sterilizing, unified and made fertile.” Négritude can be thought of as a pastoral mode because it evokes a traditional, holistic, nonmetropolitan, nature-attuned myth of Africanity in reaction to and critique of a more urbanized, “artificial” European order – and evokes it, furthermore, from the standpoint of one who has experienced exile and wishes to return.”<sup>356</sup>

Senghor’s “civilization of the African world” included the African diaspora in Europe and the Caribbean, and he sought to theorise *négritude* into a system for examining literature of both the coloniser and the colonised. It was the naturally-attuned rhythms of black poetry which Césaire sought to express as his contribution to *négritude*. As Nigel Gibson argues, “From its inception, negritude implicitly carried two different interpretations: Senghor’s emphasis on an essence based on an ‘objective visible reality,’ and Césaire’s on the individual’s experience of color.”<sup>357</sup> So Senghor theorised *négritude* into an analytical system, while Césaire, as a poet, took a more phenomenological approach, emphasising the importance of “experience” in the expression of one’s colour.

Césaire’s experiential approach to his colour began during his work on the long poem he published in 1939, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, translated as *Notebook of a Return to My*

<sup>355</sup> Dir. Mick Gordon, *Une Tempête* by Aimé Césaire, the Gate Theatre, London, Sept.-Oct. 1998.

<sup>356</sup> Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 64; quotation from Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, eds. and trans. John Reed and Clive Wake (London: Heinemann, 1976) 99.

<sup>357</sup> Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanon: the Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 71.



*Native Land*.<sup>358</sup> In this poem, he describes his experience of his colour in both France, where he was an outsider, and in Martinique, where he felt a part of the society. Throughout the poem, Africa remains in the background, the true native land from which he and the other black inhabitants of Martinique were exiled. It is in his vision of Africa that Buell's conception of *négritude* as a pastoral form becomes apparent, as Gibson states, "This remembering, which is a prerequisite to any consciousness raising, includes the 'memory' of another life in Africa, nearly synonymous with 'nature.'"<sup>359</sup> This connection between the land, the memory/imagination, and *négritude* is precisely where the ecopoetics of *négritude* are revealed. As in my analysis of the theatre, the "remembering" of Africa that Gibson describes in Césaire's work is exactly the imaginative place where art and nature meet and interact.

Césaire's *Notebook* influenced a great many writers of the colonialised African diaspora, and among those most directly inspired by Césaire was writer Frantz Fanon. Fanon was also a pupil of Césaire's in Martinique, and the two maintained a long-term connection as contemporary writers. Fanon's book, *Black Skin, White Masks*<sup>360</sup> (originally published in 1952, with a first English translation in 1967) was a direct response to the application of colonialised ideology to *The Tempest* in Octave Mannoni's *Psychologie de la Colonisation* (1950), published in English in 1956 as *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*.<sup>361</sup> In this book, Mannoni describes the colonial situation in Madagascar from a psychoanalytical perspective. He argues that the confrontation between colonised populations and colonial masters is caused by a psychology of dependence that is inherent amongst indigenous populations. Mannoni

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<sup>358</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, trans Mireille Rosello with Anne Pritchard (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1995).

<sup>359</sup> Gibson 66.

<sup>360</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

<sup>361</sup> Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956).

extrapolates from his psychological reading of the Malagasy revolt against the European colonists to apply his dependence principle to all colonised peoples. Fanon's book is a rejection of Mannoni's ideology, and a revolt against the paternalistic "looking down" on indigenous populations upon which Mannoni's view is predicated.

It must be noted that Mannoni's intention was not to present an essentially racist view of the colonial situation. He used Shakespeare's play as the archetype of colonialism, and argued against the feeling of superiority amongst white Westerners over indigenous populations.<sup>362</sup> He states that we must "cast off the obscure and in part no doubt unconscious belief that we can bring 'the advantages (or, according to some, the disadvantages) of civilization' to people who, we say, have simply remained 'closer to nature'. This is nothing but primitivism in disguise."<sup>363</sup> In this formulation, Mannoni rejects the ties to the land, and, by extension, the rights to the land, of indigenous peoples that is so important to *négritude*. Fanon, in his rejection of Mannoni, reasserts the black person's connection to nature: "Yes we are – we Negroes – backward, simple, free in our behavior. That is because for us the body is not something opposed to what you call the mind. We are in the world. And long live the couple, Man and Earth!"<sup>364</sup> Fanon's insistence on the connection between the colonised peoples and the environment relied on the same experiential sense that informed Césaire's poetry of *négritude*.

In Gibson's biography of Fanon, in which he contextualises Fanon's work within the movement of post-colonial writers, suggests that the real point in his work is the reclamation of a voice for Caliban. He says,

Recognition, grounded in an awareness of similarity, is blocked. The slave who embraces the logos of the master can at best hope for only a pseudo-recognition – a White mask. In these circumstances, the master's language does not proceed from a

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<sup>362</sup> Mannoni 18.

<sup>363</sup> Mannoni 23.

<sup>364</sup> Fanon 127.

recognized commonality; the imposition of the master's language is a violence whose victim is the indigenous culture.<sup>365</sup>

While the writers continued to work in the language of their colonisers, French for Césaire and Fanon, they strove for the rhythms of black speech and a return to the source of that language: “cultural rituals that have been caricatured by colonialism: Black magic, primitive mentality, animism. ‘Going primitive’ provides a psychological release.”<sup>366</sup> This release returned the colonial writers to a sense of self based on their own cultural heritage, their connection with nature, and the rhythms of their language.

George Lamming is another writer of the post-colonial movement, and his work more directly attempts to reappropriate the voice of Caliban as the voice of the native. In his theoretical work, *The Pleasures of Exile*,<sup>367</sup> and in his novel, *Water With Berries*,<sup>368</sup> Lamming reclaims *The Tempest* as a site for criticising the colonists. In the former book, he sets up his examination of the Prospero-Caliban relationship in terms of nature and language:

Caliban is Man and other than Man. Caliban is [Prospero's] convert, colonised by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name! Yet Prospero is afraid of Caliban. He is afraid because he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself.

[...]

Caliban is a child of Nature and a slave. These are not synonymous. A child of Nature is an innocence which is enslaved by a particular way of learning, a particular way of receiving. But a slave is not a child. Nor is a slave in a state of Nature. A slave is a project, a source of energy, organised in order to exploit Nature.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Gibson 30.

<sup>366</sup> Gibson 79.

<sup>367</sup> George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960).

<sup>368</sup> George Lamming, *Water With Berries* (Trinidad and Jamaica: Longman Caribbean, 1971).

<sup>369</sup> Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* 15.

So Caliban is a child of nature who is exiled from his land by his enslavement, because this enslavement is enacted in order to exploit that land. Thus, Prospero is set up not only as the linguistic coloniser and enslaver, but also as an exploiter of the natural environment.

Lamming's work is intimately tied to the natural world, largely because his conception of the colonial encounter is based around a sense of exile from the land. He says that the best West Indian writers have brought soil back to the novel, they deal in "lumps of earth: unrefined, perhaps, but good, warm, fertile earth."<sup>370</sup> Caliban is a figure more natural than Ariel because he is of the earth, whereas Ariel is of the air. However, Ariel is not enslaved, according to Lamming, in the same way as Caliban. He is a servant of Prospero, but he has been emancipated from the trapping of the "cloven pine." Caliban, on the other hand, is a slave to Prospero, and his servitude is also tied to the tree, the cutting and gathering of wood. Also, Lamming notes that Ariel receives his freedom at the end of the play, but Caliban's fate is left ambiguous:

For where, we wonder, is our excluded Caliban? And what fearful truth will Caliban discover now the world he prized has abandoned him to the solitude of his original home: the Island which no act of foreign appropriation could deprive him of. It is not only aesthetic necessity, but the *facts* of lived experience which demanded that the territory of the drama had to be an island. For there is no landscape more suitable for considering the Question of the sea, no geography more appropriate to the study of exile.<sup>371</sup>

Lamming reminds us that Caliban's home is not the island, he is in exile even there, just as the black Caribbean writers of the post-colonial movement were in exile from Africa. So his enslavement is actually a double-exile: he is not only exiled to the island from his true homeland, but he is also exiled from the nature of the island by his enslavement.

The work of these post-colonial writers began to effect Western interpretations of the play. Vaughan and Vaughan, in the introduction to their edition of the play, note that the first British production to dramatise the colonial politics of the play was Jonathan Miller's 1970

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<sup>370</sup> Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* 46.

<sup>371</sup> Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* 96.

performance, which was influenced, according to them, by Mannoni's book.<sup>372</sup> Bate traces the origin of the colonial discourse in Western critical material to Stephen Greenblatt's 1976 essay "Learning to Curse."<sup>373</sup> I argue, however, that Frank Kermode's introduction to his 1954 edition of *The Tempest*, while primarily concerned with the relationship between art and nature in the play, introduces the colonial discourse to Western criticism. Before Kermode, critical discourse was certainly not silent on the figure of Caliban, with Daniel Wilson's *Caliban: the Missing Link* (1870) being one of the earliest influential readings. Wilson suggests that, in the figure of Caliban, Shakespeare "anticipated the idea of a missing link in the Darwinian evolutionary chain."<sup>374</sup> This claim even affected the performance of the play, with Frank Benson portraying Caliban as a half-simian creature. Kermode updates such a reading of the character, seeing Caliban instead as an antithesis to Prospero, with the two characters constituting the nexus around which the discourse of art and nature is situated in the play. He summarises his view of Caliban saying, "His origins and character are natural in the sense that they do not partake of grace, civility, and art; he is ugly in body, associated with an evil natural magic, and unqualified for rule or nurture."<sup>375</sup> Prospero, on the other hand, is a man who "expresses the qualities of the world of Art, of the *non vile*. These qualities become evident in the organized contrasts between his world and the world of the vile; between the worlds of Art and Nature."<sup>376</sup> While Kermode allows that the men in the play, representatives of the cultural world such as Antonio and

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<sup>372</sup> Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, "Introduction," *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, the Arden Shakespeare 3<sup>rd</sup> series (London: Thomson Learning, 1999) 114.

<sup>373</sup> Jonathan Bate, "Caliban and Ariel Write Back," *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 48 (1996) 155.

<sup>374</sup> Trevor R. Griffiths, *The Tempest*, the Shakespeare Handbooks Series (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 120.

<sup>375</sup> Frank Kermode, "Introduction," *The Tempest* (London: Methuen, 1954); rpt. In *Caliban*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1992) 46.

<sup>376</sup> Kermode 51.

Sebastian, “can abase their degree below the bestial,”<sup>377</sup> and that Caliban’s exposure to the island’s spirits may elevate his status, he maintains the division between the cultural and the natural. This reading reduces Caliban, forcing the character into the frame of being the representative of some primitive and beastly race as he is represented in the play. So while Kermode can certainly not be seen as problematising the colonial aspect of the play, his investigation of the nature-art dialectic within it certainly presents a primary aspect of the colonial discourse, anticipating, as it were, the critical attention to the Caliban-Prospero confrontation.

Leslie Fiedler’s landmark book *The Stranger in Shakespeare*<sup>378</sup> furthered the colonial discourse in terms of the play, and added to the linkages between Caliban and nature (and, by extension, postcolonialism and ecopoetics). He identifies a line of derivation in Caliban’s name linking him to the Caribbean saying that “it is ‘cannibal’ anagrammatized and ‘cannibla’ is derived from ‘Carib,’ the first tribal Indian name known to Europe.”<sup>379</sup> Of course, this is a derivation that Lamming noted as far back as 1960 in *The Pleasures of Exile*, a fact not recognised by Fiedler. Fiedler also problematises Kermode’s reading of Caliban. He sees the character’s special ties to nature as indicative of his representation of indigenous Caribbean populations, and gives this a positive value judgment:

Prospero thinks of this island kingdom as a place to be subdued, hewed, trimmed, and ordered, so that, indeed, the chief use of his slave is to chop down trees and pile logs for the fire. But Caliban remembers a world of unprofaned magic, a living nature, in which reality had not yet quite been separated from dream, nor waking from sleeping.<sup>380</sup>

Fiedler turns Kermode’s dichotomy around, maintaining the duality between Prospero and Caliban, but providing Caliban, as the representative of the natural world, with a positive sense.

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<sup>377</sup> Kermode 46.

<sup>378</sup> Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972).

<sup>379</sup> Fiedler 233.

<sup>380</sup> Fiedler 235-236.

His work is more attuned to the preceding ideology of writers such as Césaire, Fanon, and Lamming, and Fiedler's positive assessment of Caliban in relation to the natural world is precisely the sort of reclamation that these writers strove to attain.

Of course, these Western critical readings of Caliban as a representative of the colonised peoples of the New World have their ultimate origin not in the works of Afro-Caribbean writers, but in the cultural-historical source material for Shakespeare's play: namely the accounts of shipwrecks and colonial encounters in America, and Montaigne's essay, "Of the Caniballes." I do not have the liberty in the context of this thesis to fully examine this source material, but a brief look at Montaigne helps develop an ecopoetic understanding of post-colonialism. Clearly, as established by several textual scholars, Montaigne's essay was the source for Gonzalo's speech on ideal government and the golden age. Eleanor Prosser provides even further evidence of Shakespeare's reliance on Montaigne by identifying parallel material between another Montaigne essay, "Of Cruelty," and Prospero's speech renouncing vengeance ("the rarer action").<sup>381</sup> Montaigne's discourse on the indigenous populations of the New World may literally be the source for Gonzalo's speech, but I find in it more thematic source material regarding Caliban, especially his connection to the natural world.

In his exploration of indigenous populations, Montaigne questions the European understanding of the people as savage and wild. Not only does he problematise the issue of culture being superior to nature, but also the too-readily accepted notion among environmental thinkers that the anthropocentrism of Renaissance humanism permanently divorced human culture from nature. He argues,

They are even savage, as call those frutes wilde, which nature of hir selfe, and of hir ordinarie progresse hath produced: whereas indeede, they are those which our selves have

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<sup>381</sup> Eleanor Prosser, "Shakespeare, Montaigne, and *the Rarer Action*," *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 1 (1965) 262.

altered by our artificiall devises, and diverted from their common order, we should rather term savage.<sup>382</sup>

In other words, based on his own and recounted experiences of these people, it is only the European influence on them that makes them savage. Or, conversely, it is only in that they are not European that they can be considered savages. Griffiths argues that Montaigne reveals a difficulty in early modern thought regarding nature and indigenous cultures. He says, “One of the great paradoxes in such attitudes to nature was that it was seen as at once purer and less corrupted than civilization, and at the same time as in need of taming, training, and education.”<sup>383</sup> Montaigne’s true bent, then, was examining the places where culture and nature met, where the interchanges between the two occurred, and, using indigenous populations as an exemplar, to question the possibility of a more natural society.

Northrop Frye makes this point explicitly when he states that Montaigne’s primary philosophical question was on the idea of “a society that lived in harmony with nature, as social animals do up to a point, and had much less, if any, need of the cultural envelope of religion, law, morality and education.”<sup>384</sup> Of course, Montaigne himself was a product of the encultured European world, and while, according to Ania Loomba, he suggested that Europeans “were both *unnatural* and unwilling to recognize that, being confident in their own superiority,”<sup>385</sup> he also looked upon the indigenous cultures with the paternal colonial eye. While some have tried to reconcile his writing with a postcolonial ethics, I find it easiest to understand his work in terms of the culture-nature discourse. In fact, in a passage that may have influenced Shakespeare’s writing of the floral debate between Perdita and Polixenes in *The Winter’s Tale*, Montaigne says,

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<sup>382</sup> Montaigne, “Of the Caniballes,” *The Tempest*, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Thomson Learning, 1999) 303.

<sup>383</sup> Griffiths 108.

<sup>384</sup> Northrop Frye, “*The Tempest*,” *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); rpt. in *Caliban*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1992) 81.

<sup>385</sup> Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 162 (original emphasis).



And if not withstanding, in divers fruites of those countries that were never tilled, we shall finde, that in respect of ours they are most excellent, and as delicate unto our taste; there is no reason, arte should gaine the point of honour of our great and puissant mother Nature. We have so much by our inventions, surcharged the beauties and riches of hir workes, that we have altogether over-choaked hir: yet where ever hir puritie shineth, she makes our vaine, and frivolous enterprises wonderfully ashamed.<sup>386</sup>

This celebration of nature over agricultural/horticultural art almost sounds anachronistic considering it was written in the late sixteenth century. What Montaigne suggests, in essence, is a renewal of culture's respect for nature, a sense of wonder in the face of nature's "beauties and riches," and an acknowledgement that human art has its basis in nature, and not as a tool to improve upon it.

One particularly interesting example of Western critical attention to the colonial discourse is G. Wilson Knight's article "Caliban as Red Man." While it would be impossible to consider Knight a post-colonial critic, his article is explicitly focused on the art-nature dialectic in the play in the context of a colonial venture. He argues that the earthiness of the character connects him to the Native Americans and the tradition of displacement in America. While he delineates various cultural-historical resonances of the character to establish this connection, he says, "Most important of all for our immediate comparison is his claim that the island is *his*; as the Red Men of America, to this hour, are persistent in their claim that they have been robbed of their land. Their land, to the Red Men, was as a living entity of which they were part."<sup>387</sup> Any colonial study or adaptation of the play must certainly account for Caliban's race and the politics of power, but for Knight and the other studies regarded here, a central issue must be that of land rights and the inherent respect of indigenous populations for their environment. Knight

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<sup>386</sup> Montaigne 303-304.

<sup>387</sup> G. Wilson Knight, "Caliban as Red Man," *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honour of Kenneth Muir*, eds. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and G.K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); rpt. in *Caliban*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1992) 180.

continues with a chilling comparison of Prospero and Caliban to modern cultures in relation to their use of nature:

We may suppose that Prospero's command of nature-spirits and nature in general is of the same order as western callousness in using nature for our immediate ends, regardless of consequences. Today the Red Men assert regularly that they have never been guilty of ravaging, despoiling, and pollution. Respect for the rights of the environment was intrinsic to the Indian way of life. In comparison our own record is appalling. Prospero is to Caliban a callous slave-master: "They all do hate him as rootedly as I." That is how nature may feel under the tyranny of technology.<sup>388</sup>

While I must take umbrage with Knight's suggestion that nature can "feel" anything in anthropomorphic terms, his comparison is certainly powerful in so much as it sets Caliban as the natural Other and Prospero as the cultural Westerner.

Of course, it must be recognised that colonial readings of the play are not unproblematic for a variety of reasons. First, while Shakespeare clearly derived some aspects of the play from accounts of the New World, he clearly set the play in the Mediterranean. Griffiths claims that the references in the play are enough to "locate its imaginative world in the spirit of exploration."<sup>389</sup> I do not dispute this claim, but merely suggest that the fact of location is problematic for a colonialist reading. Second, as Meredith Ann Skura points out, Caliban displays none of the external character traits linked to New World natives: "no superhuman physique, no nakedness or animal skin (indeed, an English "gabardine" instead), no decorative feathers, no arrows, no pipe, no tobacco, no body paint, and – as Shakespeare takes pains to emphasize – no love of trinkets and trash."<sup>390</sup> So while Caliban clearly fills the role of subjugated native, he cannot be clearly identified as a specific *type* of native. Shakespeare seems rather to have pulled him together from various New World sources and then placed him in a

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<sup>388</sup> Knight 184-185.

<sup>389</sup> Griffiths 88.

<sup>390</sup> Meredith Ann Skura, "Discourse and the Individual: the Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.1 (Spring 1989) 49.

Mediterranean landscape, the descendant of an African witch. What is important, according to Skura, is the weight Shakespeare gives to Caliban: “Shakespeare was the first to show one of *us* mistreating a native, the first to represent a native from the inside, the first to allow a native to complain on stage, and the first to make that New World encounter problematic enough to generate the current attention to the play.”<sup>391</sup> I would add that Shakespeare’s play also problematises the issue of the environment, its place in the formation of culture, and its use by varying societies.

One final problem with the Caliban-Prospero colonial crux is that it omits one of the most important characters of the play, Ariel. While Caliban is certainly a representative of a colonised individual in some ways, and is likewise tied to the land as he is represented in the play, Ariel can be seen as even more so. Shakespeare chose to introduce Ariel before Caliban, and Ariel expresses his desire for freedom first, as well. He says, “Since thou dost give me pains, / Let me remember thee what thou hast promised, / Which is not yet performed me [...] My liberty” (1.2.242-244, 245). Ariel’s demands are met by defiance from Prospero, who reminds him of the pain and torment he suffered while incarcerated in “a cloven pine” (1.2.277). While Prospero maintains Ariel’s allegiance with threats, the spirit does seem a more willing servant than Caliban, a “lackey” according to Lamming.<sup>392</sup> Skura points out,

Caliban was not alone when Prospero arrived. Ariel either came to the island with Sycorax or was already living on the island – its true reigning lord – when Sycorax arrived and promptly enslaved him, thus herself becoming the first colonialist, the one who established the habits of dominance and erasure before Prospero ever set foot on the island.<sup>393</sup>

Skura’s suggestion that Ariel may have come to the island with Caliban and Sycorax is interesting, though highly unlikely. Granted, Prospero’s recounting of Ariel’s history leaves the

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<sup>391</sup> Skura 58.

<sup>392</sup> Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* 99.

<sup>393</sup> Skura 50.

issue ambiguous, saying only that when Sycorax was abandoned on the island, Ariel “was then her servant” (1.2.271). Of course, later in the play, Caliban himself suggests that Ariel is an integral part of the island. In act three, scene two, as Caliban and Stephano plot the murder of Prospero, Ariel enters and overhears their plan. In an original stage direction, Shakespeare states, “Ariel plays the tune on a tabor and pipe” (3.2.124s.d.). Referring to the music, in some of the play’s most poetic lines, Caliban says,

The isle is full of noises,  
 Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.  
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,  
 That if I then had waked after long sleep,  
 Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,  
 The clouds, methought, would open and show riches  
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
 I cried to dream again. (3.2.135-143)

This speech of Caliban’s refers directly to Ariel’s music, and suggests that Ariel is part of the island, and not an exile upon it, as Skura argues. So, not only does Ariel’s earlier claim for freedom upset Caliban’s place as the colonial subject, but Ariel probably preceded Caliban and his mother Sycorax as the island’s true indigenous resident. Caliban, then, is himself a colonising master, at least in so far as he inherited his claim to the island from his mother.

Ariel’s probable claim to be “the true reigning lord” of the island is furthered by an examination of the character in relation to the environment. Fielder argues that Ariel and the other island spirits prefigure the colonial discourse, constructing the island landscape just as they are constructs of the imaginative theatrical world. He says that Ariel represents “the powers of the imagination which before any foot had touched its soil, already possessed the New World of the West in myth and dream.”<sup>394</sup> Fielder explicitly ties Ariel not only to the land as the pre-colonial native, but also as a part of the figuration of the New World as a place of “myth and

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<sup>394</sup> Fielder 205.

dream.” In other words, Ariel exists precisely in the place where art and nature meet, a construction of both, and in some ways a constructor of both. James E. Robinson, in his study of time in the dramatic structure of the play, makes precisely this point in a commentary that encapsulates the characters of the play within the nature-art discourse:

Much has been said about the relations of nature and art as they are expounded in *The Tempest*. There is Caliban, brute nature, lower nature as it resists cultivation, nurture, art. There are Sebastian and Antonio, nobility degenerate, nature and cultivation corrupted. There is Miranda, a perfection of nature and education, the blend of natural nobility and artful nature... If, indeed, Prospero is suggestive of the dramatic artist effecting his truth in the time of the dramatic illusion, Ariel becomes not only an expression of Prospero’s dramatic power but a symbol of the union of art and nature.<sup>395</sup>

Robinson’s formulation requires viewing Prospero as a stand-in for Shakespeare, and Ariel as the means by which both fictional magician and dramatic author effect their staged magic. He is at once the product of art (Shakespeare’s) and the product of nature (the island’s) and is also capable of producing nature (the storm, along with his other incarnations).

Writing contemporaneously with Brook’s production and Césaire’s adaptation, Harry Berger, Jr., looks at Ariel in even more specifically ecological terms. He argues, as I have suggested, that Ariel is both art and nature, and that his freedom to play magically within the text implies his adaptive capabilities in much the same way Meeker’s formulation suggests. He argues that Ariel “is not so much a spirit of nature as a spirit for nature. He looks forward to a time when the last vestiges of man will have enriched nature’s strange treasuries and trceries, bones into coral and eyes into pearls.”<sup>396</sup> This argument is too interpretive to make in regard to just the text, however. Ariel expresses, if not the emotions themselves, then certainly the capability to empathise with and understand human emotion. The spirit asks Prospero if he loves him (4.1.48), and inspires Prospero’s renunciation of vengeance when he suggests that the

<sup>395</sup> James E. Robinson, “Time and *The Tempest*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 63 (1964) 266.

<sup>396</sup> Harry Berger, Jr., “Miraculous Harp: A Reading of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*,” *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 5 (1969) 255.

magician's "affections / Would become tender" (5.1.18-19) if he beheld the effect his charm had on Gonzalo and the other shipwrecked nobility. Ariel does not seem to anticipate a time after humanity's destruction; he has too great an understanding of human kindness to be so disaffected. Nevertheless, Ariel does represent a natural character that has little need of humanity in most circumstances. Berger picks up something of this thread later in the article when he argues,

Ariel, then, is a recreative and self-delighting spirit whose art and magic are forms of play; a spirit freed by a magician whose presence on the island owes not a little to his own self-delighting recreative impulse, his own playing with arts and magic. Spirit and master have much in common.<sup>397</sup>

Perhaps this, the somewhat reciprocal (or reflexive) relationship between Ariel and Prospero, prevents us from fully reading Ariel as a colonised subject in the same way that we do Caliban.

Ariel is, however, a servant of the colonising Prospero, and is probably the true indigenous inhabitant of the island. Bate warns,

Having acknowledged the ecopoetic force of *négritude*, the white reader must be wary of appropriating a language that is not his own, of doubly speaking on behalf of the Other. The male practitioner of ecofeminist reading faces the same problem. So in thinking about a rereading of *The Tempest* in terms of culture and nature, it may be wise for the reader who is perforce a troubled Prosperian to follow an alternative track and consider an improvisation on the voice of Ariel – that voice which was silenced by late twentieth-century criticism's special interest in Caliban.<sup>398</sup>

This is precisely what Bate attempts to do in his article, "Caliban and Prospero Write Back." He begins by admitting that his own interest in the colonial discourse in the play was inspired by Greenblatt, and he had little knowledge of the writings of Afro-Caribbean poets, novelists, and theorists. In this article, he reads Edward Brathwaite's poem "Caliban" in terms of its post-colonialism and connects the colonial discourse to the connection between nature and culture for

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<sup>397</sup> Berger, Jr., "Miraculous Harp," 256.

<sup>398</sup> Bate, *Song* 89.

indigenous populations.<sup>399</sup> Bate then returns to the Romantics, reading Shelley's poem, "With a Guitar. To Jane," as an exercise in Ariel's voice.<sup>400</sup> While these readings are interesting, and certainly help to ideologically connect ecopoetics and post-colonialism, it is surprising that Bate, as a recent editor of Shakespeare's works, would not consider the possibility of *The Tempest* in performance as a means for expressing the ecopoetics of Ariel. It is in this context, in the lack of critical attention to the ways *The Tempest* can be performed ecopoetically, and the way the colonial discourse in the play can contribute to such a performance, that I turn my focus to Brook's and Césaire's adaptations.

Both of these interpretations of the play are radically adaptive, they diverge from Shakespeare's text and highlight particular thematic aspects of the play for specific dramatic and political reasons. It is my argument that these adaptations are particularly expressive of the colonial discourse in Shakespeare's original, and they do so in ways that can be interpreted as ecopoetic. I begin with Brook's 1968 "experiment" at the Roundhouse in London (mentioned briefly in chapter four). It must be noted that the production was initially envisioned taking place in a "found" performance space, namely an exhibition hall in the national furniture factory in the Parisian suburbs.<sup>401</sup> It was in this space that Brook discovered large scaffold structures which gave the company multiple vertical levels on which to work. The goal of this production was to distill the violent and sexual aspects of the play down, searching for some hidden truth in the play that Brook felt had yet to be realized. At this time, the students' riots began in France, and the company was forced to abandon the project when their performance space was overtaken. Brook moved the company to London, without the French actors, and continued the work. When the production moved to London's Roundhouse, scaffolding was constructed to

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<sup>399</sup> Bate, "Caliban and Ariel" 156-159.

<sup>400</sup> Bate, "Caliban and Ariel" 160-161.

<sup>401</sup> Hunt and Reeves 136.

achieve a similar aesthetic to what was preexisting in the Parisian warehouse. David Williams observes that the shift from Paris to London resulted in “a movement towards an investigation of the nature of space.”<sup>402</sup> He continues saying,

The environment created by the designer Jean Monod deliberately sidestepped all fixed stage/auditorium conventions, allowing the performance to reflect Brook’s view of the complexity and movement of Shakespeare’s text, and to constantly redefine and mobilise both space and the individual’s viewpoint.<sup>403</sup>

The performance style, in terms of this spatial investigation, was an outgrowth of Brook’s earlier work in the 1960s, and was related to the spatialised theatrical experiments of happenings, the environmental theatre, and the American expatriates the Living Theatre group. It is ironic, then, that the uprising of 1968 which forced Brook to move from his preferred space was partially fuelled by the French director Lebel and Living Theatre members who took over the Odéon and “issued the famous anti-art proclamation laying down the dictum that all art happened on the streets or anywhere you see it.”<sup>404</sup>

Margaret Croydon, who reviewed Brook’s experiment for the *Tulane Drama Review* (the journal edited by Richard Schechner), expanded upon her examination and contextualised it within the experimental movement of the 1960s in her book, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets: The contemporary experimental theatre*. Her description of the performance world bears reproducing at length:

[The Roundhouse is] a circular building with an enormous round dome. Inside, the “theatre” looks like a huge gymnasium – no stage, and enormously high ceilings from which hung a circus-like white canvas tent. A number of low Japanese-style wooden platforms of various dimensions jutted out into the open space. Stationed right, left, and diagonally are several giant mobile pipe scaffoldings with wooden planks, on which actors and spectators sit. At various moments, these scaffoldings, complete with members of the audience, were “rolled” or “flown” into the open playing area. Otherwise, the audience sits on three sides, on boxes, benches, stools, and folding

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<sup>402</sup> David Williams, comp., *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook* (London: Methuen, 1988) 136.

<sup>403</sup> Williams 136.

<sup>404</sup> Croydon 87.



chairs... The lights remain on – at full strength, and very white. Spectators can sit anywhere, and many choose the scaffolding, especially the highest planks. Before the performance, people mill around the arena: actors and audience are indistinguishable.<sup>405</sup>

Croydon's description of the milieu of the performance reveals the anti-theatrical nature of Brook's experiment. As this production was part of his efforts to redefine theatrical space, the environment of this performance blurred the boundaries between the audience and the actors. The vastness of the Roundhouse and the lack of scenery in a traditional sense provided Brook with the empty space that he theorised was necessary for a true theatrical event, and his adoption of techniques used by experimental theatre practitioners furthered the phenomenological experience of the world for the audience members. Every aspect of this performance world was alive, from seats to scaffolding to audience and actors, and it was out of this enveloping environment that the experimental rendering of *The Tempest* grew.

The space of the performance, and its adherence to the aesthetics of non-conventional stagecraft, provided Brook with the opportunity to use nonrealistic mimetic representation in order to evoke realistic sensations. Kustow, in his biography of the director, notes, "Early on, Brook had asked the actors to improvise on an elemental scenario in which they were to begin as water, become a typhoon, then its victim, then become wind, then fire, then soil."<sup>406</sup> The actors' bodies, wholly natural constructions, became the natural world. There were no special effects to indicate the storm, or the magic of Prospero and Ariel. All of the action grew out of the bodies of the actors. Just as it abandoned the trappings of traditional theatrical practice, Brook's production also took liberties with the script. Rather than an explicit adaptation of the play itself, the experiment was more a reflection on the central issues and themes of Shakespeare's play. As such, it gave great weight to both Ariel and Caliban, and staged extratextual moments during the

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<sup>405</sup> Croydon 246.

<sup>406</sup> Kustow, *Peter Brook* 184.

performance. For example, the opening storm scene featured some of the actors playing the passengers, others the ship, all while others enacted a usurpation scene between Prospero and his brother. Throughout this opening action, as Croydon notes, “Ariel has been invoking the storm: he uses the sleeves of his kimono as wings with which he calls forth the spirits; his speech (a combination of Japanese words and non-verbal sounds) and powerful No foot movements call up the wind, rain, and thunder.”<sup>407</sup> Ariel was played by Japanese actor Katsuhiro Oida, known as Yoshi, who became a permanent member of Brook’s theatre “research” company based in Paris after this production. He remained clad in his kimono, and Prospero wore a white jumpsuit that resembled a Karate outfit, while the rest of the cast wore plainclothes. This costuming set Ariel apart, making him a figure of focus, and also served to unite Prospero and Ariel in many ways, perhaps suggesting that Prospero’s magic is utterly reliant on Ariel’s skill, without which he would be lost. Yoshi’s movements, based on the Noh theatre tradition, were mannered, graceful and powerful, a stark contrast to Caliban.

During the production, Brook staged the awakening of the crew from their slumber, and it was at this point that the experiment diverged furthest from Shakespeare’s text. Croydon describes the scene thus, “As if in *The Garden of Delights*, they touch, smell, look, feel, and copulate – all to the echoes and repetitions of ‘brave new world’ and ‘how beauteous is man.’”<sup>408</sup> The innocent revelry was disrupted, however, by the birth of Caliban (Barry Stanton). Sycorax (Ronnie Gilbert) climbed to the top of one of the platforms and stood with her legs askew while Caliban emerged from between them, an image of darkness that Brook gave full weight to in the production.<sup>409</sup> Prospero attempted to subjugate the creature, played with a vicious sexual

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<sup>407</sup> Croydon 247.

<sup>408</sup> Croydon 248.

<sup>409</sup> Croydon 248; Hunt and Reeves 140; Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 190-191.

ferocity that Brook felt was latent in the text, by teaching him language. However, when the lesson focused on the words “master” and “slave,” Caliban escaped from his potential coloniser, raped Miranda, and asserted his own control over the islanders before he was finally subdued by Ariel “with a magical touch to his back.”<sup>410</sup> Brook emphasised the colonial narrative in the play, focusing on Caliban as a “thing of darkness” (5.1.275) and a sexual coloniser. Ariel, on the other hand, remained apart from the colonial story, a spirit more free in this interpretation than in the text itself. This gave Brook’s production a certain ecopoetic impact, emphasizing the two sides of the natural world: the awesome beauty and power (represented by Ariel), and raw untamed carnality (represented by Caliban). The two, while never fully integrated into the play, were linked by the fact that they were representative of the play-world itself.

As it was a thematic adaptation of the play with a post-colonial interest, Caliban could not remain imprisoned. He escaped from Prospero’s grasp again, and took over the island. Hunt and Reeves, building off of Croydon’s review, describe the action saying, “The islanders became monsters, Caliban became the monster-master. He and Sycorax created a wild orgy, mirrored by the company’s sexual configurations. Variations on sexual positions conveyed a monster-sexuality; the Garden of Delights was transformed into Hell.”<sup>411</sup> This wild sexuality stands in stark contrast to *Forbidden Planet*’s portrayal of sexuality, which prevents Alta from being free in the expression of her feminine sexuality. As he gained control of the island, Caliban used his power over the islanders to stage a coup in which they captured and prepared to kill Prospero while intoning the line, “This thing of darkness I do acknowledge mine.” Rather than kill his would-be colonial master, however, Caliban enacts an even more gruesome fate, exerting his

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<sup>410</sup> Arthur Horowitz, *Prospero’s “True Preservers”: Peter Brook, Yukio Ninagawa, and Giorgio Strehler – Twentieth Century Directors Approach Shakespeare’s The Tempest* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) 82.

<sup>411</sup> Hunt and Reeves 140.

power over the magician in a mime of homosexual rape, which was mirrored by the company. Vaughan and Vaughan argue that the production “charted the way to new stage interpretations of Caliban. The role now represented power more than subjugation.”<sup>412</sup> Brook’s sexualisation of Caliban became an assertion of the character’s own dream of freedom upon the island. Mike Stott, the playwright who worked with the company on *US*, provided Brook with material on the hypothetical theme of “If Caliban ruled the island,” which bears examination in excerpt:

I’ll build me a palace of dead men’s bones, glued together with flesh and fat... I would let Prospero live. He would be my royal bog... I’d breed off Miranda. Only daughters would live! When they got old enough to fuck, I’d get rid of Miranda. I’d have her thrown into my royal bath, my lake of sweet-smelling perfumed mud. And I’d jump in after her and fuck her deep down in the mud. She’d drown in ecstasy, and all there’d be above the surface would be my head, gazing at the moon and...saying: “We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep”.<sup>413</sup>

This mad sexuality is deeply entrenched in the colonial psychology of Mannoni and Fanon, with one seeing it as a certain primitive rejection of cultural mastery, and the other viewing it as an expression of pure freedom.

Mannoni, as a member of the French colonising culture, saw the sexuality of the Malagasy people as something that was not inherent to their race or culture, but as a reaction to their dependency on colonial masters. He describes the eruption of sexuality during funeral ceremonies (as part of the Malagasy “cult of the dead,” or ancestor worship), and argues that they cannot be viewed as “orgies” in the European sense.<sup>414</sup> Rather, he argues, “All this mass of emotion charged with a rather savage sexuality – is an important though invisible element in the composition of colour-prejudice, or racialism.”<sup>415</sup> Fanon rejects Mannoni’s claim, asserting

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<sup>412</sup> Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban* 191.

<sup>413</sup> Hunt and Reeves 141.

<sup>414</sup> Mannoni 53.

<sup>415</sup> Mannoni 111.

rather that the sexuality white colonists fear in the black slaves is an inherent part of the black culture's connection to nature. According to his biographer Nigel Gibson,

White civilization's sublimation of libidinous drives, primarily sexual, finds an outlet in the production of the Black as sexual Other – deviant, oversexed, and sensuous. The Black is body, a set of external organs – woolly hair, flat broad nose, thick lips, and especially an oversized penis – living in immediacy and sensuousness, which cannot be controlled and thus is beyond morality.<sup>416</sup>

So the anti-colonial writer takes ownership of sexuality, claims it as part of herself or himself, and sees it as an inherent part of sensuous and immediate connection with nature that exists in indigenous populations. Brook's Caliban certainly was the outlet for colonial sexuality in his production, perhaps even more so than Césaire's version of the character, as I discuss shortly. In the end, Caliban's sexuality is, for Brook, triumphant, and his victory over the tyranny of Prospero is complete at the end of the production.

At the end of the performance, the company drew together and intoned Prospero's epilogue as a group, each actor speaking a word or several words. This emphasis on the words of the play is the only point in the production when Shakespeare's text is not given a radical overhaul, and it remains in its place, the last words spoken as the performance closed, but taken away from Prospero and split amongst the cast. This kept the performance world open. Croydon notes, "The lights stay on, there is no curtain, the empty space remains quite empty."<sup>417</sup> Much like the use of the house lights in the 1962 stage version of *King Lear*, this refusal to lower or raise the lights left the world open-ended. The audience remained a part of the action throughout the performance, and would carry the impressions and the experience of the event back out into the world. Like his colleagues in the environmental theatre movement and the Living Theatre, Brook seized something of the violent and tumultuous spirit of the time with this experiment.

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<sup>416</sup> Gibson 22.

<sup>417</sup> Croydon 249.

We must remember that rehearsals for the production began a week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A., and that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, then a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, was assassinated during the rehearsal process. Clearly, the race relations in the U.S. were on the front-burner of the international stage, and coupled with the riots in Paris, it seems clear that Brook's company absorbed the upheaval in the world at large into their production.

Unlike the practitioners in these other groups, however, Brook and his company grasped the spirit of their own time through a text that was hundreds of years old, emphasising the timeless themes, and the connections between their world and that of the play. Hunt and Reeves highlight this saying, "Brook's concern was the search for essence, for basic fundamental truths; he did not want to be caught up in the day-to-day activity of what happened on the streets as he felt that could only lead to a 'living newspaper' kind of art."<sup>418</sup> So while others asserted that real theatre was everywhere, except in the playhouses, Brook brought the theatre of the world at large into the performance space. Certainly he used the methods and ideologies of the *avant garde* theatre, but he rejected their demand that theatre cannot be theatrical. As Orgel summarises, "It is designed to bring into the theatre a recognition of how powerfully subversive much of the play's energy is, how incompletely it controls its ambivalences and resolves its conflicts."<sup>419</sup> This connection of the play's energy, through its technique of audience involvement, with the violent and subversive energy of the world outside the theatre forms the basis for an ecopoetic interpretation of the work. In other words, the creation of the performance world was designed to connect it to the real world, and the thematic actualisation of the violence and subversiveness reflected and furthered this connection.

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<sup>418</sup> Hunt and Reeves 138.

<sup>419</sup> Stephen Orgel, "Introduction," *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 87.

Aimé Césaire's dramatic adaptation of *The Tempest* is in the same ilk as Brook's theatrical one: capturing the violence and upheaval of the time, asserting Caliban's power, giving a unique voice to Ariel, and, I argue, similarly constructing its world ecopoetically. Brook's adaptation came at a turning point in his career, and Césaire's *Une Tempête* concluded a trilogy of plays that marked a shift in his career from poetry to drama. Scharfman argues that this shift indicates "the evolution of the spatialization of Césaire's text when he moved from poetry to the theater in the 1960s."<sup>420</sup> Césaire himself was intimately involved in Martinican politics, and his work reflects the politicization of *négritude* in terms of colonial revolution. He was elected mayor of Fort-de-France, the Martinican capital, in 1945, and remained involved in politics until 2001. *Une Tempête* privileges the positions of Caliban and Ariel, and insists on overturning the colonial paradigm. Its conception of the land and the connection between these indigenous characters and the world is also an act of implacement, to use Casey's term. The colonised people, almost universally people of colour, are forced by white colonisers into servitude, a slavery tied directly to the land itself. At the same time, while the enslaved indigenous population maintains its close ties with the land, the colonisers assert ownership over the land. Crispin, in the introduction to his translation of the play for the Gate Theatre's 1998 performance, makes the connection explicit in terms of Césaire's adaptation saying, "Colonialism is envisioned as a disease, a dehumanising project that treats land, nature and people as brute commodities."<sup>421</sup> My investigation focuses on how an ecopoetic understanding of Césaire's work lays these inequities bare, and how the overturning of the colonial order frees both people and land.

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<sup>420</sup> Ronnie Leah Scharfman, *Engagement and the Language of the Subject in the Poetry of Aimé Césaire* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1980) 17.

<sup>421</sup> Philip Crispin, "Césaire's *Une tempête* at The Gate," *"The Tempest" and its Travels*, eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London: Reaktion, 2000) 156.

The first part of an ecopoetic reading of any work is the examination of its world, as I have established in my previous case studies. Césaire's play leaves just as much room for interpretation as Shakespeare's, and the first production of it showed that while the playwright's focus was on race relations in the Caribbean colonies, it was just as applicable to a North American context:

Strangely, the first performance of *Une tempête* was set in pioneer American, using the motifs of the Western. Although this may seem incongruous in view of the play's references to Africa and, more specifically, the Caribbean, the decision to set the play in America demonstrates the possibilities of alluding to, or even of integrating, a number of colonial dramas on one stage. Thus, Césaire's adaptation is as open to a variety of times and locations as Shakespeare's text.<sup>422</sup>

The play's first director, Jean-Marie Serreau, worked closely with Césaire on all three of his dramatic texts. Like Brook, Serreau was interested in theatrical space, "Serreau was trained as an architect, and brought to his work an abiding concern for the construction – literal and figurative – of dramatic space."<sup>423</sup> The decision to set the performance in America specifically highlights the problems of race relations there in the 1960s: the assassination of King and Kennedy, two important figures in the American civil rights movement, led to race riots across the country. Serreau and Césaire, working together on this production, indicated the importance of race construction to the politics of the era.

At the outset of the play, the actors are milling around in an anti-theatricalised opening narrated by an emcee. While the original production took a more recognizable location for its performance, Césaire's text calls for the *mise-en-scène* to be the space of psycho-drama. The result of this opening is reminiscent in some ways of environmental theatre, breaking down the

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<sup>422</sup> Lucy Rix, "Maintaining the State of Emergence/y: Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête*," *"The Tempest" and its Travels*, eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London: Reaktion, 2000) 237.

<sup>423</sup> Robert Eric Livingston, "Decolonizing the Theatre: Césaire, Serreau and the Drama of Negritude," *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, ed. J. Ellen Gainor (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 183.



distinction between actor and audience. The actors eventually don masks, with the emcee commenting, “It takes all sorts to make a world.”<sup>424</sup> Thus, the world of the play is constructed through the use of the masks, identifying the actors with the racialised characters they portray. While acceptance of this convention is necessary in order to comprehend Césaire’s play, it problematises the issue of race, pointedly suggesting that race is a cultural construction, and not a natural attribute. Timothy Scheie notes, “Césaire’s negritude separates racial identity from natural or biological attribution in order to signal its historicity, and consequently its mutability. His use of cross-race casting and masks in *A Tempest*...underscores the contingency of the characters’ racial identity.”<sup>425</sup> In other words, there is no race except as it is constructed by human agency, and by the agency of the person performing as a racialised subject. Scheie continues his argument saying,

The use of masks would seem to exemplify Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, or “alienation effect,” which distances the characters’ perceptions of the world around them to reveal what they do not see about the social, economic, and political situation that shapes their identity and determines their life’s course. In Césaire’s case, the masks serve to reveal race as a historical regime of power relations, and to alienate the characters’ assumption that the status quo of race relations on the island is somehow “natural.”<sup>426</sup>

The effect of alienating the characters from their world and the factors that shape their identity is not highlighted by the use of masks, but created by their use. The goal is to allow the audience to stand apart from the action, recognising that the characters are blind to these influences, and hence to critically assess the world. One assumes the goal is to force the audience into a realisation that the same blinding effect governs their own lives, and to take the lessons of the performance of racialisation into the world outside.

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<sup>424</sup> Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Philip Crispin (London: Oberon Books, 2000) 11.

<sup>425</sup> Timothy Scheie, “Addicted to race: Performativity, agency, and Césaire’s *A tempest*” (West Chester: West Chester University, 1998), <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3709/is\\_199804/ai\\_n8799729/print](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3709/is_199804/ai_n8799729/print)>.

<sup>426</sup> Scheie <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3709/is\\_199804/ai\\_n8799729/print](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3709/is_199804/ai_n8799729/print)>.

Rix takes Scheie's argument one step further, extrapolating from Césaire's masks as indications of performing race out onto the whole of theatrical performance. She claims, "In making explicit the process of construction and impermanence, this theatre could be mobile and provisional: it could adapt itself to an individual environment rather than the audience adapting themselves to the institutional stasis of traditional theatre."<sup>427</sup> The goal of Césaire's theatre, then, is the same as the goals of environmental theatre and Brook's spatial experimentation: to re-enliven the theatrical experience for the audience. In fact, Alvina Ruprecht cites both Schechner and Brook as influences over Césaire's theatrical style.<sup>428</sup> The system of masking a cast, of whatever race, makes that cast capable of performing the play anywhere; it also makes the identity (constructed or intrinsic) of the actor less important to the process of production. The race represented by Césaire onstage is temporary and only an aspect of the world of the play, it is not an intractable aspect of the world at large. Therefore, the ecopoetics of the production inherently create race, and Césaire's world reflects the world at large by insisting that race is a matter of performance rather than nature. We cannot change the fact that colour is natural, not a construction of society, but race is a purely cultural concept that has no power in the natural world. This concept, while overlooked in large part by the play's commentators, is essential to understanding the world of *Une Tempête* and the action that occurs within that world. The spatialised construction of the theatrical world, and its sense of being constructed through performance, was a major aspect of Mick Gordon's 1998 staging at the Gate Theatre.

In this staging, director Mick Gordon and designer Dick Bird took their cues from Césaire's spatialised conception of the play. Malcolm Bowie's review of the production describes their world:

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<sup>427</sup> Rix 242.

<sup>428</sup> Alvina Ruprecht, "Staging Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*: Anti-Colonial Theatre in the Counter-Culture Continuum," *Essays in Theatre/Études Théâtrales* 15.1 (Nov. 1996) 60.

Mick Gordon's staging...translates Césaire's verbal poetry into a poetry of multi-dimensional space. From the opening storm onwards, this space is mobile and malleable; it expands to fill the last cubic inch of the Gate's small premises, and then shrinks down to an automated box on wheels.<sup>429</sup>

The production included a miniature beach with the sun represented by a bare light bulb. This suggests that the world of the production, like race in that world, is merely a construct, that it can be as big as the entire theatre, or as small as a model. Ferdinand's servitude to Prospero was not moving logs, but smoothing the sand on the beach: he "slaved" over a small tray of sand with a spoon.<sup>430</sup> All this suggested that the drama on the stage was not real, was not intended to be a mimetic representation of the world at large. Rather, it was meant to be, as Brook's *King Lear* was, a space of the imagination, a location in which the human drama of race and colonisation could be expressed, problematised, and possibly resolved. Of course, this production was a timely one: "1998 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first wave of post-war immigrants from the West Indies to Britain on board the Windrush (many of whom settled, in fact, in Notting Hill)."<sup>431</sup> Of course, the Gate Theatre is situated in Notting Hill, and Crispin sees the production as being particularly apt for its time and place, much as the original adaptation was particularly apt in 1969.

Part of the reason that Césaire's play is so malleable in terms of style and setting is that it makes so few references to the natural world itself. Whereas Shakespeare's original is full of natural description, Césaire's says little of its world, and thus the world can be constructed in a variety of ways. So the play could be performed on a blank stage, on a street corner, or on an

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<sup>429</sup> Malcolm Bowie, "Island Logic," rev. *Une Tempête*, dir. Mick Gordon, *The Times Literary Supplement* (9 Oct. 1998) 22.

<sup>430</sup> Paul Taylor, "Power play on a lonely isle," rev. of *Une Tempête*, dir. Mick Gordon, *The Independent* (25 Sept. 1998) 9.

<sup>431</sup> Crispin 149.

ornate set reflecting the natural beauty of the Caribbean world: or, as in the two productions I study, in the American West or the space of the imagination. One telling moment in *Une Tempête* comes in act two, when Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Antonio discuss the island in a scene reminiscent of act two, scene one, in *The Tempest*. Gonzalo again sings the praises of the island while the others disdain it. Gonzalo's dream of turning the island into a utopia is exposed as even more colonial in its import in this adaptation as in Shakespeare's. He suggests using guano to fertilize the ground where it is barren in order to turn the land into a paradise. In other words, he proposes using cultivation to govern the natural beauty of the island, whereas Shakespeare's Gonzalo suggests a natural world that needs no governance, which supports its human inhabitants without the influence of cultivation. Césaire's version of the character says, "It's clear a wonderful land can only contain wonderful beings."<sup>432</sup> While Gonzalo's wonder at the natural world is an important feature of the ecological discourse, Césaire augments the character with his own brand of colonialism. So Gonzalo, like the other white Europeans in the play, cannot appreciate the land for itself, cannot bear even one barren spot, but must apply his vision of paradise (a cultivated landscape) on the place.

In his examination of the play's impact on anti-colonial theatre, Livingston quotes Césaire in a speech to French students in 1967, "Theatre should evoke the invention of the future. It is, especially in Africa, an essential means of communication. It must, accordingly, be directly comprehensible by the people."<sup>433</sup> This expresses two ideas: the evocation of the future, and the understanding of theatre. The first is important as it relates to the world of the performance. In many ways, Césaire's work is its own utopian project, envisioning a world in which his conception of freedom for the colonised peoples of the world can be realised. Just as

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<sup>432</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 29.

<sup>433</sup> Livingston 183.

*Forbidden Planet*, as a science fiction film, envisioned its world of human technological destruction, Césaire's world envisions the expression of his political standpoint. Arnold argues, "What began as an apparently theatrical device is now revealed to be of real thematic importance. Césaire has used the combined effect of stagecraft and poetic suggestion to present the animist world in a respectable and desirable light."<sup>434</sup> The move toward animating the world, toward filling it with important signifiers of life, when coupled with the utopianism of Césaire's anti-colonial politics, suggests an ecopoetic analysis of performances of the play that examines these issues and ties them together, and as these two productions show, the flexibility of the play's location only increases the possibility of these connections. Bate argues that the play "is more than an assimilation of Shakespeare into the discourse of *négritude*: it is also a starting-point for an imagining of the voice not of a nation or a race, but of the ravaged earth itself."<sup>435</sup> It is through the world of the performance, through the construction of the relationship between the human characters and that world, and, as in my examination of other productions, through the building of a relationship between the world and the audience that the voice of the earth as Bate understands it in the play can be understood.

Miranda stands alone among the white characters as a non-colonial, probably because she was not raised as a European exactly, knowing nothing but the island in terms of environment. Early in the play, she identifies herself to the audience and to Ferdinand saying, "I'm queen of the flowers, the trails and the running waters, always running barefoot through thorn and flower, spared by one, and caressed by the other."<sup>436</sup> Her admiration for the natural world of the island is undimmed by her age, uncorrupted by the worldly sarcasm of Antonio and Stephano, and untainted by the colonial impulse to control the world. She wants to know the island, not to

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<sup>434</sup> A. James Arnold, "Césaire and Shakespeare: Two Tempests," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 30 (1978) 247.

<sup>435</sup> Bate, *Song* 80.

<sup>436</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 15.

cultivate or control it, and the result is the harmony with which she interacts with the world. Miranda tells Ferdinand, “The island is so lovely. I will show you the beaches and the forests. I will tell you the names of the fruits and the flowers. I will reveal to you a world of insects, of lizards of every colour, of birds...Oh if you knew! The birds...!”<sup>437</sup> It seems, in fact, that the only impediment to Miranda uniting the European colonists (in the heir to the throne Ferdinand) with the natural world she loves is Césaire’s vision for the play. Barely present after the first few acts, and then largely as witnesses for the greater colonial conflicts occurring on the island, Miranda and Ferdinand are not granted the time to develop as characters, nor to develop their burgeoning relationship with the natural world. Of course, this reading of Miranda is tied into the deep ecology discourse of a rejection of cultural constructions and a return to a mythical “state of nature,” and this is impossible, as I have already asserted. Rather, I suggest that as Gonzalo’s dream of utopia in *The Tempest* is turned into a dystopic view of the island covered in farms, Miranda’s view of the humans in Shakespeare’s play as a “brave new world” (5.1.183) is similarly overturned by Césaire. Rather than the human characters representing the “brave new world” it is the nature of the island that occupies and awes this Miranda. Zabus argues, “Césaire’s play is governed by dialectics.”<sup>438</sup> Meaning that dualities dominate the dramatic action: black and white, nature and anti-nature, Old World and New, theatrical and real. Miranda and Gonzalo are examples of Césaire using these dichotomies in relation to Shakespeare’s text; they are not the same characters that Shakespeare created, but they are new creations in dialogue with the old, imaginative examples, and if not complete opposites, then certainly reverse images of Shakespeare’s.

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<sup>437</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 24.

<sup>438</sup> Zabus 53.

Césaire himself makes this clear in an interview from shortly after the play was published and first produced. He outlines his authorial intention saying,

I wanted to show that today's world, the twentieth-century world was born at the time of *The Tempest*; it was born during the Renaissance; it is the world of reason with all that it entails: science, colonization, etc. And today, we have reached the end of that civilization which ensued on the Middle Ages.<sup>439</sup>

In Césaire's mind, the world of 1968, the world in which he wrote *Une Tempête* was the Renaissance world's end point. The modern world overturned, or would overturn, the dominant paradigms of the era that began with Shakespeare's time: reason, science, colonisation, and the other ideologies that Césaire understood to be part of that system. As previously stated, many environmentalists suggest that the anti-environmental aspects of humanist anthropocentrism are part of the same system of Renaissance thought that dominated the world. While problematic in historical terms, as discussed earlier, to attribute anti-natural thinking to the Renaissance, it was clearly part of the formulation in Césaire's thinking, as evidenced in the play by the figure of Prospero. As part of the play's dialectics, Prospero is presented in opposition to Caliban, not only as his colonial oppressor, but also as the anti-natural character. Much of Caliban's naturalness is revealed through the anti-natural figuration of Prospero, but even these are constructions, just as race is in the play. Just as Prospero figures Caliban as the black, indigenous, natural, and beastly other in the play, so Caliban figures Prospero as the rigidly logical, anti-natural, oppressive colonialist. Thus, the ecopoetics of the play as they are expressed through these two characters are often revealed in examining the colonial confrontations and how they play out in respect to the play's world.

Structurally, Césaire's play follows Shakespeare's fairly closely, and the first confrontation between Prospero and Caliban happens in act one, shortly after the storm.

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<sup>439</sup> Zabuz 53-54; quotation from L.S. Belhassen, "Un poète politique: Aimé Césaire," *Le Magazine Littéraire*, vol. 34 (Nov. 1969).

Prospero, clearly, is white, or is a character whose racial construction is denoted by a white mask. Caliban, conversely, is black, as is the actor playing the character in Césaire's vision. The two literally are opposites, and the only complete opposites in the play. Even Ariel is described in the list of characters as a mulatto. In the first confrontation between the two, Caliban blurts at Prospero:

Dead or alive, she is my mother, and I won't deny her! Besides, you only think she's dead because you think the earth itself is dead...It's so much more convenient! Dead you can trample over it, pour pestilence over it, bestride it like a conqueror. I respect the earth because I know that it is alive, and I know that Sycorax is alive.<sup>440</sup>

Caliban understands the earth as analogous to his mother, Sycorax, and formulates his closeness to nature as he would a proximity to his mother. Ariel, as the mixed race character of the play, mediates to a certain extent between the two. He substantiates Caliban's understanding of Sycorax as nature, a complete departure from Shakespeare's text, through his regret at being freed from the tree. He muses that he might have become a tree, or at least a part of the tree, if he had remained "imprisoned" in it. At the very least, he imagines becoming a bird that could have a close relationship with that tree.<sup>441</sup> Ariel becomes attached to the tree, to his environment, through his residency within it, he becomes implaced, in other words, in its wooden entrails. The image of the bird is important, as it is a symbol of freedom. While Ariel becomes attached to the tree as his home, the animal he imagines having close ties with that tree is a bird. This is reminiscent of Miranda's wonder at the birds, as suggested above. Birds, and the freedom provided by their wings, are an important image of emancipation in the play.

Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, whose ecocritical study of Césaire's adaptation remains the only one to date, reads Ariel's dream of becoming one with the tree as indicative of the fact that humanity and nature are not divided as some formulations hold. She says,

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<sup>440</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 20.

<sup>441</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 18.



Whereas Ariel's fusion with the tree is taken to be a form of imprisonment by Prospero's nonparticipating consciousness, the image lends itself, as we have seen in Césaire's version, to a more holistic interpretation. While Prospero's relation to the world is atomistic, the image of Ariel in the tree suggests an embryonic interconnectedness with the environment of which he is a part and on which he depends. Ariel's fusion with the tree can be taken as evidence that person and environment are not only profoundly connected but, as Morris Berman argues, "ultimately identical" (77). This image captures the reversibility of experience between self and world whereby to experience the world is to be experienced by it. This intertwining represents a mode of being alternative to our metaphysical detachment from the sensible and living world.<sup>442</sup>

This formulation postulates Ariel as the ideal experiencer of the world, the character most completely open to the understanding of nature through complete immersion in it.

Unfortunately, Césaire's play does not provide us with quite this much evidence. His imagery is suggestive of this argument, and he certainly provides us with a beginning point from which we can extrapolate, as Bate does, a voice for Ariel (and hence for nature). Willoquet-Maricondi's argument, however incompletely evidenced in the text, certainly grounds the character of Ariel in the space where art and environment, culture and nature meet. None of the accounts of Serreau's original staging of the play say much about Ariel, but in Gordon's 1998 adaptation, Ariel is marked by his slowness. Whereas Caliban is a strong and physically imposing figure, Ariel is small, light, retaining some of the airiness of Shakespeare's original character. Ariel does not take sides: he mediates, to a certain extent, between Prospero and Caliban, but never chooses one over the other, despite the fact that he is, like Caliban, a colonial subject.

In fact, Ariel seems largely indifferent to the magician, whereas Caliban is vehemently opposed to him, and not just as a colonial oppressor. When he confronts Ariel in act three, scene four, who leads a band of the island's animals in a morning salutation, about joining the revolution, Caliban suggests the ultimate opposition between himself and Prospero. He says, "Prospero is the Anti-Nature. And I say: Down with the Anti-Nature! And does our hedgehog

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<sup>442</sup> Willoquet-Maricondi 220-221.

bristle at that? No, it flattens its spines. That's Nature! She's kindness itself. You just have to know how to speak to her."<sup>443</sup> Clearly, this harangue is not directed at Ariel, who understands how to speak to nature, and how to listen to nature as well. Neither is it directed at the animals, who are clearly a part of nature. Rather, it seems to be directed at the audience, those of us reading or seeing the play who seem to have lost our ability to speak to nature. This is clearly an expression of Césaire's feelings about Shakespeare's original, expressed in an interview thus: "Caliban is the man who is still close to his beginnings, whose link with the natural world has not yet been broken. Caliban can still *participate* in a world of marvels, whereas his master can merely 'create' them through his acquired knowledge."<sup>444</sup> This reveals the keys to an ecopoetic understanding of Césaire's adaptation: first, he believes that there is a rift between humanity and nature, and that Caliban exists in a state prior to the formation of that divide; second, that the key to connecting with the natural world is through *participation*. The phenomenological experiencing of the environment, in Césaire's adaptation, is the way to bridge the gap between humanity and nature.

Prospero's standing as the anti-natural character is not so much because he destroys nature, but because of his instrumental approach to the world. He is not so much a polluter, as he is the ultimate representation of the non-participatory, anthropocentric worldview. In one of his most poetic speeches in the play, he reveals this saying,

I am not, in the ordinary sense  
the master, as this savage thinks,  
but rather the conductor of a vast score:  
this isle.  
Teasing out voices, myself alone,  
and coupling them at my pleasure,  
arranging out of the confusion

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<sup>443</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 49.

<sup>444</sup> S. Belhassen, "Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*," *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Middlesex and Baltimore: Penguin, 1972) 176 (original emphasis).

the sole intelligible line.  
 Without me, who would be able  
 to derive music from all this?  
 Without me, this island is dumb.<sup>445</sup>

Prospero envisions himself as the orchestrator of the natural world, a world that, without him, would be without its own voice. However, he sees this voice only as being expressed in harmony, in a unity, not recognising that the chaos itself is nature's true voice. This is the key difference between Prospero and Caliban: the former wants everything in nature to fit into its specific place within his symphony, whereas the latter wishes to free the voices of nature to sing for themselves.

Césaire clearly expresses his own vision of the world through the figure of Caliban, constructing Prospero as the Western other and Caliban as the indigenous voice. He says, "To me Prospero is the complete totalitarian. I am always surprised when others consider him the wise man who 'forgives'. What is most obvious, even in Shakespeare's version, is the man's absolute will to power."<sup>446</sup> In many ways, this is precisely what Brook's production also staged. His Prospero was the willful, powerful oppressor, and Caliban's violent revolt originated in Prospero's own violent overtaking of the island. For Césaire, this image of the magician was clearly representative of the colonial takeover of the New World, and the oppression of indigenous populations. In the ecopoetics of the play, this is presented as an oppression not only of the people (in the figure of Caliban), but in the oppression of the land itself. Willoquet-Maricondi summarises this argument saying,

Whereas Prospero sees the island as empty and mute, a blank page on which to inscribe his monologic master narrative, Caliban celebrates its aliveness, his integration within it, and his dialectical relationship with it. Caliban's desire to "get back my island and regain

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<sup>445</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 60.

<sup>446</sup> S. Belhassen 176.

my freedom” reminds us that his ability to be free is inextricably bound to the freeing of the land (69).<sup>447</sup>

Of course, one of the most important aspects of this project, the freeing of the land, is predicated upon the freeing of the imagination to understand and experience the environment in participatory terms. It is in this vein that Césaire’s adaptation could be most effective on stage, but is sadly hampered by its lack of performance history.

In one of his most radical departures from Shakespeare’s original, Césaire has Prospero remain on the island at the end of the play. He explodes in a violent tirade saying, “I’ll defend myself...I will not let my work perish...I will defend civilization! (*He fires in all directions.*) They’ve got what was coming to them...Now, this way, I’ll have some peace for a blessed while...But it’s cold...Funny, the climate’s changed...Cold on this island.”<sup>448</sup> Meanwhile, the text calls for Caliban to remain offstage, and for his song to be faintly heard echoing amidst the sounds of the waves and the animals. Scheie argues from the post-colonial perspective, “The final scene...mirrors the opening, with Prospero the sole master of the island and its indigenous population. The dynamic, however, has changed, and it is a desperate Prospero who closes the play.”<sup>449</sup> Caliban has overcome Prospero, at least to some extent, though Prospero’s choice to remain on the island suggests that the colonial confrontation will continue. Césaire chose to reflect the cultural situation in the natural world, with the climate change indicating a change in the power relations on the island. As in Brook’s production, the shift in power indicates that Caliban is now lord of the island, a fact that Bate expresses in distinctly ecopoetic terms:

“Caliban’s freedom means a unification of his voice with those of the birds and the surf.”<sup>450</sup>

Whereas Brook’s Caliban exerts his freedom in sexual dominance over his colonial oppressor,

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<sup>447</sup> Willoquet-Maricondi 213.

<sup>448</sup> Césaire, *A Tempest* 61.

<sup>449</sup> Scheie <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3709/is\\_199804/ai\\_n8799729/print](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3709/is_199804/ai_n8799729/print)>.

<sup>450</sup> Bate, “Caliban and Ariel Write Back” 159.

Césaire's is content to roam the island that was his, reasserting his rights to live in the land rather than to work on it.

Willoquet-Maricondi sees Césaire's play as almost a fable for indigenous land rights and the ecological consequences of colonialism. She says,

What *A Tempest* attempts to stage, is the fact that the decolonization project necessitates a rethinking of our relations with the land. A rebirth of the cultures oppressed by the West entails a rebirth of the land, and land must be conceived not as property or mappable space, but as a form of being in its own right.<sup>451</sup>

The linkages between the postcolonial and ecocritical projects certainly suggest that the two, in political terms at least, have a great deal to contribute to one another. It is important to note that Césaire did not intend any ecological narrative with this play. He saw Caliban as the man-in-nature character and Prospero as the anti-nature. It remains, however, that the key struggle between the two is over ownership of the land. There can be little doubt, from an ecological perspective, that Caliban would be the better character to be known as "owner" of the island. Prospero's attempts to limit, control, and compartmentalise the natural world, are analogous to the Western instrumentalist view of nature. He wishes to prevent the environment from flourishing, to diminish it to little more than a tool. Caliban, on the other hand, seems to reject stewardship nearly altogether, desiring ownership merely to renounce even the possibility of such ownership, and free the island from Prospero's limiting grasp. However, Césaire sets up the two as diametric opposites: there is no dialogue between them, only conflict. While we, as audience members or readers, may be able to stand back and realise that their conflict is merely a construction, an abstract notion of race, they cannot gain any critical distancing.

Thus, the models for ecological behaviour in the play remain mired in a deep ecological sense of opposition. Clearly, Prospero is not the anti-nature: he may wish to control nature, he

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<sup>451</sup> Willoquet-Maricondi 211.

may be reductionist, but he still appreciates the voices of the island when they sing in the key he desires. Caliban, on the other hand, may still have a close relationship with the living environment, but he is not part of the cultured world. Even in Césaire's play, Caliban is more an animal than a man in that he takes no part in human relationships except in opposition, his fellows are the animals. This notion of man in the state of nature may be the dream of deep ecology, but it does not express any helpful ideas relating to the situation of humankind as it really exists. Bate argues, "In our twenty-first century, we need to treasure the memory or the myth of an island which Prospero has left, an ecosystem which man is content to leave alone. Post-colonialism has restored a voice to Caliban. Ecopoetics asks us to imagine that Ariel can be set free."<sup>452</sup> Of course, Césaire paints Ariel as the potential middle-ground in the play: he is mixed race, he is connected to nature but also part of the cultural world, and he wants no part in Caliban's violent revolution but still desires his freedom. Nevertheless, Césaire's focus on the colonial confrontation leaves Ariel largely outside the main focus of the production. The ecopoetics of the play focus on a dichotomous conflict between culture and nature, and while that may be indicative of the relationship as Césaire understood it, and certainly reflects the colonial conflict, it remains that a true ecopoetic understanding must reconcile nature and culture. Ariel wishes to remain one with the tree, and we may have similar desires, but it is necessary that we recognise that the tree is part of our culture, and our culture is part of the tree.

### **Post-Script**

Aimé Césaire died 17 April 2008, during the final stages of revision to this thesis. Productions of *Une Tempête* remain few and far between in Western theatres, but it is possible to hope that the attention paid to his life and work resulting from his death may encourage more practitioners to take up his challenging theatrical works. His dream, in *Une Tempête*, was for a world in

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<sup>452</sup> Bate, *Song* 93.

which the disenfranchised members of the African diaspora could experience a reunification with the land that was once theirs. Since his writing of the play, the West has become more and more understanding of environmental issues, and studies such as this one seek to link the ideology of post-colonialism with the ecological discourse. I hope that one of Césaire's legacies will be his enduring desire for a world free of tyranny and oppression, both for the people and for the land.

## **Conclusion**



## Chapter 7:

### Rupert Goold's *The Tempest* and Global Ecopoetics

In a 2007 article examining the use of natural resources in the modern theatre, Mark Fisher poses a dangerously underinformed question, “Should we wonder at the scarcity of green-themed plays, when the theatre business itself has such a voracious appetite for resources?”<sup>453</sup> The answer is, of course, that there is not a scarcity of “green-themed” plays, there is only a lack of attention to these plays on national stages. In the introduction, I mentioned studies of productions written specifically with environmental issues in mind, and adaptations of plays to express environmental ideology. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed performances that have not had ecology in mind during their production, but which nevertheless can be seen, through their creations of performance worlds, to be expressive of environmental ideas. It has been my argument that the process of production, world-creation or ecopoetics, in Shakespearean performance and adaptation, can be seen as an ecological way of constructing the world. Fisher, in his article, interviews Graham Eatough, director of the Suspect Culture theatre company, who says, “If you asked a green activist to describe the ideal form of entertainment in 2050, it would resemble theatre: natural comings-together of communities to tell stories, without the wasteful production of artefacts.”<sup>454</sup> However, the story itself is a cultural artefact, and the theatrical performance is an artefact, so while Eatough’s mind is clearly in the right place, he fails to recognise the inherent ties between the cultural and the natural.

It is not as a form of art that can “go green” in terms of its means of production that theatre can best be seen as an ecological artform, but in its imagining of the world, and in the

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<sup>453</sup> Mark Fisher, “Alas, poor planet,” *The Guardian* (7 Feb. 2007) 24.

<sup>454</sup> Fisher 24.

expression of a world that is meaningful and engaging with its audience. Eatough finally suggests, at the end of Fisher's article, "I worry about how viable it is to argue that the only way to deal with these problems is to reduce activities that can be creative, positive and fulfilling."<sup>455</sup> Certainly, it is important for all industries, from power production to art, to strive for cleaner and less wasteful means of creating their products. After all, we live in a world that is endangered, but the danger is not in the destruction of the world itself but in making the world uninhabitable to life, both human and more-than-human. By understanding the creative process in theatre we can begin to understand the real possibility of an ecological approach to performance criticism. Throughout the course of this thesis, I have discussed different strategies utilised by theatrical practitioners, and different understandings of performances by engaged reviewers and critics, to create engaging performative worlds. Some of these strategies include a rejection of traditional theatre spaces, radical adaptations of texts, reconnection of the audience with the performance, creating a new environment in cinema for an old story. All of these strategies, I argue, can be seen ecopoetically: that is, we can create a new strategy of performance criticism that is more attuned to the process of world-creation in art, and the environmental issues of the world at large. In the melding of these two ideologies, I develop a strategy for performance criticism that is largely adaptive, I examine the ways in which new performance worlds for Shakespearean works engage audience, and how the worlds fit with the dramatic works they stage.

In this chapter, I conclude my arguments on theatrical ecopoetics with a discussion of Rupert Goold's 2006 production of *The Tempest* for the Royal Shakespeare Company's "Complete Works" celebration.<sup>456</sup> This year-long season of all things Shakespeare is itself an interesting point of examination: artistic director Michael Boyd's ambition brought companies

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<sup>455</sup> Fisher 25.

<sup>456</sup> Dir. Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, perfs. Patrick Stewart, John Light, Julian Bleach, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, opening 8 Aug. 2006 and world tour.

from around the world to Stratford-upon-Avon to stage every play and poem that Shakespeare wrote. I will not deal with the problematic nature of early modern authorship, as the RSC's goal was not to engage in a debate over Shakespeare's canon but to celebrate the writer in an open and multicultural way. This festival demonstrates that Shakespeare is a truly international figure, a notion central to my work. While the work of Beckett, or Mamet, of Césaire, or any number of other playwrights, may be more directly connected with the problems of the modern world, they are not produced with the same frequency, variety, or variability in location as Shakespeare's works. This is part of the reason I chose to focus on Shakespeare in this thesis: if there is any playwright for whose work a system of ecopoetic performance analysis is most necessary, it is his because of the very adaptive nature of his work's impact in the modern world.

Goold's *The Tempest*, in many ways, has its own international appeal. Not only did it go on a world tour, but its star, Patrick Stewart (Prospero), is recognized the world over for his film and television work (particularly his portrayal of Capt. Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: the Next Generation* on both large and small screens). So while it was certainly an integral part of one of the most ambitious theatrical efforts to stage Shakespeare, Goold's production was also guaranteed to draw crowds who had never seen *The Tempest* before. In my own experience of seeing the production while living in Stratford-upon-Avon, I recall hordes of pointy-eared, jump-suited young men awaiting return tickets outside the RSC box office. Thus, Goold's vision for the play certainly had to accept responsibility for the play on several levels: first, as a faithful representation of Shakespeare's play (this was no Brookian "experiment"); second, as part of an international theatrical festival dedicated to celebrating the works of Shakespeare through theatrical performance; and, third, as a first experience in Shakespearean performance for many of its audience members. Of course, no director would acknowledge that all of these forces have

sway over the production process, but it is in this context that Goold's production was formulated.

While not as revolutionary as Brook's "experiment," and while remaining a fairly true "interpretive" adaptation of Shakespeare's play, Goold did not rest on a firmly traditional staging. The opening of the play was a radio announcement, the shipping report warning the audience (no characters are on-stage) of impending storms, as an old radio is projected onto a screen at the proscenium-arch line. Then, through what had been the radio's speaker, the radio-room of the ship became visible, and in this cramped space the opening scene unfolded. Finally, as chaos took hold and the ship abandoned, the scene dissolved into a projection of the storm onto the screen. This was no tropical hurricane, however, but an Arctic blizzard. One reviewer said the opening had "special effects worthy of a Steven Spielberg blockbuster."<sup>457</sup> The other productions of *The Tempest* I discussed did little to dramatise the storm sequence. Brook's 1957 production gave us a hint of stormy weather, completely under the control of Gielgud's Prospero, *Forbidden Planet*'s storm was the deceleration aboard Capt. Adams's ship, the storm in Brook's 1968 "experiment" was interesting in that it was completely created by the actors' bodies and Yoshi Oida's movements as Ariel, and while Césaire's text does call for a storm to be acted out by the players, reviews of the original production and the 1998 Gate Theatre revival reveal little of the storm's staging.

In his landmark work *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx argues that *The Tempest* prefigures the creation of American culture. While he does not take a stance on the colonial issues of the text, he sees the play as a revolutionary new form of pastoral literature upon which the American literary tradition is founded. As such, he sees the storm in Shakespeare's work as

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<sup>457</sup> Tim Walker, "Shakespeare, Shock and Awe," rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *Sunday Telegraph* (13 Aug. 2006) 22.

integral to the play's performance: "The opening scene dramatizes the precariousness of civilization when exposed to the full fury of nature... Disorder in society follows close upon disorder in nature."<sup>458</sup> In Marx's argument, the storm is the prelude to the play, and the play is itself the prelude to American culture. Thus, the storm is an important part of the making of the American mythology. In his work, the idea is that the American culture is predicated on technology that strives to control nature: or Prospero's magical art dictating the storm. The pastoral ideology he sees in early American writers such as Thoreau and Emerson came from a rejection of the technological power over nature, and this is prefigured and problematised in *The Tempest*:

Here the landscape, so far from representing Eden of the original state of nature, is an idealized version of old England – a countryside that men have acted upon for a long time... If the land now looks like a magnificent garden, there is no reason to doubt that it once was a hideous wilderness. This paradise is a product of history in a future partly designed by men.<sup>459</sup>

The pastoral ideal, then, is harmony created by human technology to tame the natural wilderness, and the storm is an instance of nature breaking free. Rather than the environment being shaped by human technology, here the disorder in society is created by chaos in nature.

In Goold's production, the computer-generated storm, replete with strange electronic sound effects reminiscent of the storm in Brook's film of *King Lear* (discussed in chapter four), is impressive in its size and scope. As in Brook's work, the storm is a product of human theatrical technology, and it is not an attempt to stage "a storm" with any mimetic accuracy. Rather, the storm gave a strong sense of the turbulent natural world, and for Goold it was only the prelude to the shock that followed when the world of the play was revealed behind the screen. In a distinct break from both the text and theatrical tradition, this version of Prospero's

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<sup>458</sup> Marx 51.

<sup>459</sup> Marx 62-63.

island was revealed to be no tropical paradise, no imaginative realm of the mind, but a frozen Arctic isle (sets designed by Giles Cadle). Layered sheets of painted wood provided the ice floe that covered the island and jutted up to a point near the centre of the stage. This frozen tundra provided the company with the opportunity to explore a new vision of *The Tempest* without radically adapting the text. As Greg Walker notes, “The move to the ice-fields enables Goold to evoke a whole new mythology for the play, compounded in equal parts of Inuit mysticism and the later scenes of *Frankenstein*, which is every bit as relevant to its themes as the more conventional allusions to colonial exploitation of the West Indies.”<sup>460</sup> It also suggested, as Brook’s film did, images of the endangered Arctic in our real modern world. In a personal conversation, Goold’s assistant director Steve Marmion told me they wanted a world that could be both “bleak and beautiful” and exotic enough for the magical qualities of the island to be believable. As Brook’s desire for an empty space that was remote enough to look both ancient and timeless led him to Lapland for his film of *King Lear*, so the desire for a specific world led Goold to the Arctic for his island.

The Arctic setting of this production certainly jarred with the audience’s sense of the play, following Brook’s ideology of subverting expectations in order to create a world in which they could be more engaged. Nowhere in the performance was this subversion more apparent than in Gonzalo’s (James Hayes) speech regarding the natural bounties of the island. He observed, “How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!” (2.1.55), and swept snow off the ice. The scorn heaped on the counselor by Antonio and Sebastian was coupled with a laugh from the audience, the sight was truly ridiculous. Benedict Nightingale, in his review of the production, said of the setting, “All of this [the setting] is pretty strange, and even more so when

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<sup>460</sup> Greg Walker, rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, special issue of *Cahiers Élisabéthains: a Biannual Journal of English Renaissance Studies* (2007) 48.

lines about lush plants and sweet airs are almost perversely emphasised.”<sup>461</sup> The moment did present Gonzalo as something of a doddering fool, but it also cast a new light on his view of the utopia. In all the productions of the play I have discussed, the utopian project is visible, whether it is in the technological wonders of space travel or the freedom of slaves. In this performance, however, the ridiculousness of Gonzalo’s “Golden Age” becomes a paramount point. His comment on the green grass serves to cheer the king, who mourns the loss of his son, and serves as comic relief, but there is a darker tension in this moment than such a superficial reading suggests.

Part of the tension in this scene is developed several lines after Gonzalo’s observation of the not-so-green grass. His soliloquy on the ideal government reveals the true goal of Western inhabitation of the extreme north:

I’ th’ commonwealth I would by contraries  
 Execute all things, for no kind of traffic  
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;  
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty  
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,  
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard – none;  
 No use of metal, corn, or wine or *oil*;  
 No occupation, all men idle, all;  
 And women, too, but innocent and pure. (2.1.148-156, my emphasis)

While I add the emphasis to the printed lines above, Hayes certainly emphasized the word *oil* in his delivery of the line. The grass may not have been green and lusty, but the island, as an Arctic land, contained greater riches beneath its ice sheets: oil. This is quite clearly a topical reference in the performance, with the prospect of the United States drilling for oil in the fields of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) coming to the forefront of political discussions during the summer of 2006, a debate that has been renewed with more vigour during the current oil crisis. At the same time, scientists and geographers suggested that if global warming continued,

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<sup>461</sup> Benedict Nightingale, rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *The Times* (10 Aug. 2006) 21.

Arctic locales formerly unable to support drilling expeditions would become open to such ventures. Clearly, there is a rejection of this ideology in Gonzalo's philosophy, which closely resembles deep ecology. He rejects the use of oil above all else in the speech, because he knows that territories like this island are at particular risk from oil prospectors. At the same time, the performance holds up his viewpoint for ridicule, not only amongst the characters of the play but also as the butt of the joke for the audience.

This production largely avoids the colonial confrontation through its setting, though Caliban still retains the traits of the colonised individual. This is a non-traditional colonialism, not targeted at a race as in a West Indies formulation of the plot, but targeted instead at the land. In our discussion of the production, Marmion told me that Goold felt that colonialism could be expressed through the takeover of the land by multi-national oil corporations in the Arctic rather than the traditional white master-black slave dialectic. While neither Goold nor Marmion explicitly make an ecological connection, I would argue that this is precisely the connection between post-colonialism and ecopoetics that I envisioned in the last chapter. Yes, Caliban is a slave, and as I discuss below, his portrayal by John Light certainly inspires a level of pathos with the character. The greater colonial subject in this formulation, however, is the land itself. As H.R. Coursen notes, "*The Tempest* is a play of great 'otherness,' and it is an otherness that changes as history decides what 'the other' is and is not."<sup>462</sup> In this context, the colonial appropriation was strictly set against the land itself as the ultimate other. In his study of the play, John Gillies follows Marx in arguing that the play is an alteration of utopian ideology:

What this building-up and emptying-out of utopia also suggests is that there is no going back. The dream of renewal, once entertained within history – that of Prospero's island or Caliban's nature or the New World – is irreversible. The haunted utopia is still utopia.

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<sup>462</sup> H.R. Coursen, *The Tempest: A Guide to the Play*, Greenwood Guides to Shakespeare (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 177.



The ground, once having been cleared, will never revert to forest. The New World, once having been conjured forth, will never collapse back into the Old.<sup>463</sup>

The play can no longer be performed without the spectre of colonialism that Césaire and others realised in it, but perhaps Goold's revolutionary staging will result in a similar paradigm shift to the one inspired by Brook's 1962 *King Lear*. Maybe we can begin to understand the play not only in the context of colonialism, but also in the context of the environment, and this may perhaps serve to connect the work of post-colonialists and ecocritics in a way that can further both fields of critical inquiry.

As in Brook's film, in which, I argue, the harsh natural environment provides the possibility for aesthetically representing the sense of implacement, Goold's production showed how the characters dwelt in this frozen island. The first character we meet after the storm is Prospero, alone in his "cell," conjuring the storm in a cloak that appears to be bearskin. Along his head, Prospero has tattoos resembling those of certain Inuit cultures, and while Stewart portrays him as a strong man, he also appears tired, as if his monumental struggle with the elements has drained him. One reviewer called him "a true shaman, inhabiting his desert island in tough conditions."<sup>464</sup> Another said he resembled "some kind of shabby Lapland shaman, clad in a bearskin cloak and reindeer-skull headdress, raising the spirits from a burning brazier."<sup>465</sup> These reviewers clearly garnered an increased sense of Prospero's magic, he is a shaman, an elder, one who connects the human culture and the natural world, as David Abram's research for *Spell of the Sensuous* showed. The shanty-like cell this Prospero inhabits is hardly protection against the elements, and the opening moments of the performance are the only time we see him

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<sup>463</sup> John Gillies, "The Figure of the New World in *The Tempest*," *"The Tempest" and its Travels*, eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London: Reaktion, 2000) 200.

<sup>464</sup> Alistair Macaulay, rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *Financial Times* (10 Aug. 2006) 9.

<sup>465</sup> Christopher Hart, "The perfect storm," rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *The Sunday Times* (13 Aug. 2006) 18.

wearing the magic cloak, so it seems clear that he is at home in this frozen landscape. He has carved a small niche into the environment, but is not recreating the cultural world of Milan in the wild. Rather, the wild seems to dominate his world, and he seems to be at one with it.

The only other human structure in this staging is Caliban's "cave," consisting of the skeletal carcass of an old boat (see appendix, figure twenty-one). Caliban (John Light) is portrayed as a native Inuit: he wears the skins of the region, lives outdoors, and remains tied to his boat-home, which he also uses as shelter against the storm and as a sled for hauling logs. The boat is the most important aspect of the formulation of Caliban as a native: he is tied to it, suggesting literally his connection to the sea and fishing as a way of life (in fact, this is the only reason that he smells like a fish), but the boat is nothing more than a skeleton. His old life was based around the nature of the island, the sea and fishing, but his new life is hauling firewood for Prospero, a violation of his traditional livelihood akin to the disenfranchisement of indigenous cultures in the Caribbean that Césaire's play (and other post-colonialist writers) rebelled against. Walker notes in his review that the new setting provided a justification for Prospero's enslavement of Caliban because it "made much more obvious sense of the need for all that chopping and carrying of wood, which can appear strangely moribund and fetishistic in more temperate settings."<sup>466</sup> This gave Prospero justification for his requirement of Caliban's servitude, but it also created a sense of reliance on Caliban that can be lost in a more tropical setting. In a way, this is a reversal of Mannoni's principle of dependence, in which the colonised need the influence of colonial masters. What the production showed is that the coloniser, Prospero, needs his slave while Caliban could live happily without his master.

Apart from a hunched walk and a gravelly voice, John Light portrayed this Caliban as essentially human, adding to the sense that he has been grievously wronged by Prospero. The

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<sup>466</sup> G. Walker 48.

only problem with the portrayal was the eye-protection he wears: small cups with slits cut into them to avoid snow-blindness. Natives to the North need no such protection, their eyes being acclimatised to the weather conditions through a lifetime in the landscape. So it is clear that while Caliban had certainly adopted the lifestyle of the Inuit people (or Lapps), he was not a native to this place. He had become implaced, probably when his mother Sycorax and he were marooned on the island. It may be all he knows as home, and he may have been displaced by Prospero, but this Caliban is not indigenous to the island. Of course, this sort of mimetic accuracy is not a necessary aspect of the production's staging in ecopoetic terms. While the presence of his eye shades, for this viewer, suggested a separation between Caliban and the land, it is clear that the production strove to tie the character to his natural habitat.

As I mentioned above, the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, while leaving the question of race alone, certainly reflects the colonial situation as it was perceived by the anti-colonial writers I examined in the last chapter. In act one, scene two, when Prospero and Miranda (Mariah Gale) go to meet Caliban, Prospero spits in the slave's food without provocation. As in Brook's 1957 production of the play, Caliban lunged at Miranda when he lamented his failure to people the isle with his progeny (1.2.349-351). Prospero anticipated this Caliban's lusty advances, though, and grabbed the rope that connected Caliban with his home. In mid-leap, Stewart's Prospero tugged at the rope and Light's Caliban was again prevented from raping Miranda. The master-slave dialectic is perfectly in place here: the rope, while not used as such, is suggestive of both the whip and the lynching noose, and while Light is a white actor, the setting for this production shows that the colonial confrontation can occur between members of the same race when the play is put into a non-Caribbean context (see appendix, figure twenty-two). Whether white or black, Caliban is deprived of his land, and forced into a life of servitude

that does not fit with his experience of freedom on the island. Prospero's ill-treatment of Caliban is particularly vicious in this production, furthering the colonial sense and giving further impetus to Caliban's murder plot. Beyond spitting in his food, Stewart's magician seemed to gain a particularly sadistic pleasure from inflicting physical torment on Caliban as punishment for his ill-behaviour. The lack of any real "monstrosity" in this portrayal of Caliban pushed audience sympathies onto him: we are given little justification for Prospero's truly vile treatment of his servant. Of course, the relationship between Prospero and his other servant on the island, Ariel, reveals that Caliban may be merely an outlet for Prospero's colonising impulse, which he cannot bring to bear on the "airy spirit."

I put that phrase in inverted commas because Julian Bleach's portrayal of Ariel is anything but airy. We first saw Ariel during the storm on the boat, when he stalked quietly into the radio room and put one of the sailors to sleep with an icy touch of his hand. Bleach's characterisation of the part was reminiscent of the vampire in the German film *Nosferatu*. If, as Bate suggested in *Song of the Earth*, the white Western ecocritic's approach to *The Tempest* is to find a voice for Ariel, avoiding the pitfalls of speaking for the Other, then a production's take on the character is of vital importance to an ecopoetic reading. Bleach's Ariel was most definitely a creature of his frozen island world, and numerous moments in the production suggested his unbreakable ties to the nature in which he was at home. After first seeing him during the storm, Ariel is absent from the play, reappearing in the second scene at Prospero's bidding by coming up through the oil drum stove. Michael Billington states, "Ariel, having been imprisoned in a cloven pine by Sycorax, now spends much of his time in a Beckettian dustbin like *Endgame*'s Nagg."<sup>467</sup> While this comparison between Goold's staging and Beckett's play is interesting, I

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<sup>467</sup> Michael Billington, "Brave new Arctic world of Shakespeare's final play," rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *The Guardian* (10 Aug. 2006) 34.

would argue that Nagg's imprisonment in the dustbin is indicative of the decay of civilisation. As I examined Beckett's work in relation to Brook's 1962 staging of *King Lear*, the dustbins signified man's disconnection from the natural world, and Ariel did not only appear through the oil drum in Goold's production. Later in the same scene, the door from Prospero's home to the outside swung closed and Ariel was revealed standing behind it, and his later appearance as the harpy came in another surprising way (which I will discuss shortly). Rather than suggesting his imprisonment, I read this Ariel's ability to appear from a variety of places as indicative of his connection to the world of the performance. He can manifest himself from nothing (literally "thin air") and immediately become part of the scene.

Ariel's servitude reveals the major difference in this production between him and Caliban. Whereas Caliban was tied to his home, his chores, his master, this Ariel was essentially free, and more powerful than his master could handle for much longer. In the second scene, even as Ariel was physically contained within the oil drum, his demands for freedom were met with fear from Stewart's Prospero. The magician backed slowly away from the spirit toward his desk where he retrieved his magic staff, his only defence, it seemed, from the power wielded by Ariel. Hart's review notes this interesting power dynamic, "The relationship between Ariel and his tyrannical master is shot through with malignancy and, on Prospero's part, even fear."<sup>468</sup> If Brook's experimental 1968 production revealed, as Vaughan and Vaughan assert, that Caliban had become a symbol of power rather than subjugation (discussed in chapter six), then it seems Goold's imaginative endeavour was to set Ariel's voice free. The fear with which Prospero regarded his spirit-servant was palpable right from the beginning and continued through to the end. When, at the end of the second scene, Ariel took the hour-glass from Prospero's desk and turned it over, we knew that his freedom was imminent. Dominic Cavendish says, "A figure of

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<sup>468</sup> Hart 18.

Beckettian austerity – white-faced, black-garmented, unsmiling – Bleach creeps around the stage clutching an hour-glass, his handheld countdown to personal liberty. How greatly he craves that freedom is communicated by nothing more extravagant than his haunted eyes.”<sup>469</sup> Cavendish’s noting of Ariel’s attire is important: not only is his face whitened, but Bleach’s hair stood on end throughout the performance, making him appear frightening and imposing, but also reminiscent of an icicle. Even in appearance, this Ariel was closely linked to the land of which he was an integral part.

The “harpy scene” is another important indication of Ariel’s characteristic connection to the icy environment. Rather than a more traditional presentation of an opulent banquet, Ariel’s “spirits” brought in what appeared to be a seal carcass on a sled. The spirits, dressed in warm anoraks, presented the animal to Alonso and his train without the dancing and theatricality called for by Shakespeare’s stage directions (3.3.17s.d.). The nobles reached into the animal, pulling out hunks of bloody meat until its midsection began to pulse in a moment several reviewers saw as an homage to the science-fiction film *Alien*. Out of the animal’s stomach burst Bleach, still dressed as Ariel but with long bone-like structures on his fingers suggestive of a harpy’s wings, and covered in blood and gore (see appendix, figure twenty-three). The prompt-book gives no indication of this, nor is it mentioned by other reviewers, but my personal recollection of the performances I saw is that Bleach gave special weight to the lines:

I and my fellows  
Are ministers of fate. The elements  
Of whom your swords are tempered may as well  
Wound the loud winds, or with bemocked-at stabs  
Kill the still-closing waters, as diminish  
One dowl that’s in my plume. (3.3.60-65)

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<sup>469</sup> Dominic Cavendish, “Something too rich and strange,” rev. of *The Tempest*, dir. Rupert Goold, *Daily Telegraph* (10 Aug. 2006) 28.

This speech connects the human culture of the “three men of sin” to nature by clearly stating that their swords, cultural artefacts, are in fact made of natural elements. However, Ariel also makes it painfully obvious to these men that his own, and his spirits’, connection to nature makes them impervious to the attack of these human weapons.

It is important to note that I saw this production several times, all in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and that the effects of certain moments varied based on where I was in the theatre, so they certainly varied when the production transferred to other venues. This moment when Ariel emerged from the seal carcass is one example of this. In my first viewing, I sat in the stalls, so there was no advanced warning of Ariel’s appearance apart from the pulsating of the dead animal, and the effect was truly haunting. On another occasion, I sat in the front row of the balcony and could see Julian Bleach moving in the body before his emergence. From this vantage point above the stage, I noticed that the other actors in the scene could also see Bleach as he prepared to “scare” them. This partially ruined the effect for me, though I was happy to have already seen it from a better vantage point. Also, though, this suggested how tenuous an experience of a performance can be. If I had not been anticipating the moment in my subsequent viewings, I might not have noticed the movement, and thus the effect may not have been ruined. However, audiences viewing the production for the first time from the balcony might have also noticed the movements and anticipated the haunting appearance of Ariel as the harpy. In a way, this makes a phenomenological approach to theatrical criticism problematic: what I see and what another viewer sees is not the same thing. But it is no more tenuous than a more semiotic approach: what an aspect of the performance signifies to me could be different from what it signifies to another audience member. The point that I need to make is that many performances seek an engaged, experiencing audience. This is the legacy of the work of Brook and Schechner

and the other experimental theatre practitioners in the 1960s, and as critics we need to engage a production in a way that can take into account the experience of the performance rather than simply reading its signifiers.

The wedding ritual in Goold's production was the only major break with Shakespeare's text in the course of the performance. The three goddesses were not presented as such, but were the attendant spirits of Ariel who appeared from around Prospero's cell. The names of the goddesses, and the words they speak or sing in Shakespeare's text were completely cut, and Goold's goddesses performed an elaborate ritual with the young couple. Wood was burned in a small bowl and the ashes smeared on the foreheads of Ferdinand and Miranda, suggestive of the Christian Ash Wednesday ritual, but also suggesting the importance of wood in this Arctic land. There was rhythmic drumming and dancing, the couple was blindfolded and set next to each other, emblems of the innocence with which they were to approach their wedding. According to assistant director Marmion, the goal of this ritual was to connect the culture of Prospero to the world of the island. They used Inuit rites as the primary inspiration for the wedding masque, but incorporated elements of rituals from a variety of colonised cultures. In the end, the masque was effective: it suggested ties to the land, it was believable as a performed ritual, and it was exotic enough to seem "other" to the mostly Western audience at the RST. However, as noted in relation to Brook's staging of *Oedipus* in chapter four, the appropriation of rituals can be disconcerting to an audience. In this case, the audience was not asked to participate in the ritual, as they were in Brook's production, and could comfortably watch the performance. So while there was the suggestion that the culture of the production was tied to its world through its rituals, the audience was not engaged any further at this moment.



The Arctic setting for this production gave it a topicality, in this world plagued by global climate change, which became evident in the physical effects of the plot on the island. After the interval, the curtain rose on Prospero's cell, but there was something different about this interior scene. The flat backdrop that denoted the wall separating the inside from the outdoors was tilted awkwardly. This alteration in the physical appearance of Prospero's home went unexplained until a few moments later, when the backdrop was raised to give another ice-scape and, for the first time, the audience saw the exterior of Prospero's cell (see appendix, figure twenty-four). The raised portion of the ice floe, which served as a hill in the first half of the performance, was now split open, and Prospero's cell was perched precariously on the rim, tipping slightly into the newly-formed crevasse. As the production continued, the angle at which the cell hung increased until, in the final moments of the performance, it was nearly half-sunk below the splitting ice. The world was literally splitting apart, the island reclaiming the land that Prospero had usurped for his home. Any environmentally-attuned audience member could not help note the topical reference to climate change here. Daily news articles mention the effect of human industry on the environment, and one of the constant and underlying concerns is the melting of our planet's polar ice caps. Marmion suggested to me that this was an intentional reference, though Goold was careful not to make any explicit political statement.

The splitting of the island ice sheets was linked directly to the loss of Prospero's hold on the island, and this was most evident in Ariel's release from servitude. Stewart delivered Prospero's final command to Ariel:

I'll deliver all,  
 And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales  
 And sail so expeditious that shall catch  
 Your royal fleet far off. My Ariel, chick,  
 That is thy charge. Then to the elements  
 Be free, and fare thou well! (5.1.314-319)

At this point, he cast his magic staff into the ruins of his former home, now falling into the crevasse, and from deep in the bowels of the ice floe a burst of flame shot forth (see appendix, figure twenty-five). Ariel, finally released from his servitude, exited slowly into the ruins of the shack, a glimmer of content breaking through the solemnity that had governed Bleach's performance. As he disappeared into the ice, the flames burst higher, suggesting, perhaps, that Prospero's power may have been great, but Ariel's was greater. This creature of ice, meeting the flames, literally melted away, and was released again to the elements which were his home and of which he was constituted. Ariel, nature's representative in the play, was free, and Prospero's hold over the island was ended. The shack would be swallowed by the flames and engulfed by the ice and, as Prospero says, "leave not a wrack behind" (4.1.156). This is also the dream of the ecocritic, that there is a world we humans are content to leave untouched, a place that is governed by its own natural laws. We are all, like Prospero, merely itinerant inhabitants of this world, and our hold over the world must be relinquished one day.

As noted above, Goold's production was something of a global performance, touring the world and connecting audiences, but remaining in Western theatres. In a way, it was an embodiment of an ecological ethic that is evident in the play. The land is liberated, as are the characters who are tied to that land, and the revolutionary setting tied the aesthetics of the stage world with the situation in the world outside the theatre's walls. Beyond being an expression of an environmental viewpoint, the production can be seen in terms of ecopoetics, its construction of a world. This world was not a mimic of the real world, though it was based on that world. It was a fictional realm, an island on which the drama of *The Tempest* could unfold but could also resonate with an audience constantly responding to the threats and challenges of living in its own endangered world. Roland Greene says,

Worldmaking is very much in this play's sights, and major characters are defined in part by their involvement with the making of worlds. Between Tunis, Milan, Naples, Bermuda, Carthage and the strategic no-place of Prospero's island, Shakespeare posits a plurality of worlds – that is, symbolic orders that represent social, religious and political regimes – that can scarcely be bridged in human experience, and across which the only suitable bridge is magic, with Prospero as worldmaker.<sup>470</sup>

I would argue that, theatrically speaking, the worldmakers are the director, the designer, the company of the performance, all working in concert with a complicit audience. We project our own world onto the world of the stage, especially in this play which has so very many worlds contained within it. This production is revelatory of the world in which we live, it is a space in which both Shakespeare's drama and the drama of our own conflict with nature can be explored and played out. The resolution comes when we recognise that the world of the stage is not synonymous with the world outside the theatre, but is reflective of it. The way theatre constructs its fictional stage worlds, or film constructs its cinematic worlds, suggests something of the way we conceive of our natural world. The confrontations of this performance, between characters and other characters, between characters and the island, and between the audience and a new and challenging environment for the play, show precisely the ecopoetic model. It is the ecological construction of the fictional world, the environmentally-minded production that shows us that Prospero's relinquishment of his hold over the island is the same conflict we face today. It is the adaptation of Shakespeare's play for a world that faces many of the same challenges dramatised therein.

Throughout this thesis I have examined performance worlds. Brook's two visions of the *King Lear* world reflected the turmoil and upheaval of his time, and provided a harsh vision of nature that also fit the play's aesthetics. I contrasted Brook's film adaptation of *King Lear* with Grigori Kozintsev's, suggesting that the ecopoetics of the former engaged the process of world-

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<sup>470</sup> Roland Greene, "Island Logic," *"The Tempest" and its Travels*, eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London: Reaktion, 2000) 138-139.

creation and audience engagement more fully than the latter. Both are great films, and Kozintsev's ideology for creating his cinematic world as he expressed it in *King Lear: the Space of Tragedy* is effectively engaged ecopoetically. But the world that resulted from his performance was not as resonant with the world at large. His story always returned to the society, to culture, not giving the world, nature, its own voice within the scope of the film. The first part of this thesis concludes that *King Lear* is not, in fact, a pastoral tragedy, as posited by some critics. Rather, it is a play in which the performance environment takes a particularly active role, and my investigation of Peter Brook's work on the play concludes that he is intensely engaged in the process of adaptive world creation, which I analyse ecopoetically.

In the second part of this thesis, I use Brook's work on *The Tempest* not as my exemplar but as points of comparison. I argue that while *Forbidden Planet* and Brook's 1957 production of *The Tempest* present us with new and interesting takes on the world of the play, they do not fully engage the world-creation process. These two performances, the subject of chapter five, are certainly valuable in terms of the originality of their worlds, but these worlds are not constructed in a way that engages with the bigger issues of the planet. In Césaire's adaptation of the play, my analysis suggests a much stronger sense of the living environment, and the implacement of the characters within the world. Compared with Brook's experimental adaptation of the play, which dramatises many of the same themes, I argue that these two theatrical works construct engaging and dynamic performance worlds. I suggest that the struggle of indigenous cultures for freedom, a freedom that is inherently tied to the land that is theirs, connects the post-colonial and ecological dialogues. Césaire's *Une Tempête* is a world that is every bit as pliable as in Shakespeare's original, adaptable to settings as various as the Caribbean, the American West, and London's Notting Hill. The world of the play, as in Brook's

adaptation, is deeply engaged in the politics of its era, and constructed to deeply engage its audience in the experience of the environment. Finally, in this concluding chapter, I have examined Rupert Goold's Arctic vision of *The Tempest*, arguing that its radical setting most directly referenced the tensions in the world of its audience.

My goal throughout this thesis, as stated in the introduction, is to formulate an original method of performance analysis that is more attuned to the conditions of the production process. This analysis, which I call ecopoetics, draws on a variety of fields of study: ecological criticism (or ecocriticism), aesthetics, and a modified phenomenology, with a primary understanding of performance as an art of adaptation. I have argued that these tools can be applied to theatrical analysis in the same way that they can be utilised in examining the natural world. In this thesis I have looked exclusive at Shakespeare in performance, though I would argue that my method of ecopoetic analysis is applicable to all forms of performance, literature, and art, with slight modification of the specific critical tools. My choice to focus on Shakespeare was governed not only by my own experience with his plays as audience member, director, producer, and student, but predominantly because of the global influence of his plays. In the RSC's Complete Works season, companies came to perform his plays in the town of his birth from the United States, England, Germany, Italy, India, Africa, and more. His plays remain a part of the modern world partially because of the efforts of critics and scholars to bolster the "Shakespeare Industry," but also because their theatricality remains so adaptable. "Straight" productions as varied as Brook's 1957 and Goold's 2006 *The Tempests* can alter the play in fundamental ways, yet still engage with its central themes. Radical adaptations can express latent ideas in the plays that can reconnect the dramas with audiences. In other words, Shakespeare has become a global language for performance, a testing ground for theories and ideas, and a place for the audience to

see its own world in new ways. If any playwright's work is appropriate for new methods of performance analysis, it is Shakespeare's.

The world in which we live is in a state of emergency. Humanity's, especially Western civilisation's, overuse of fossil fuels, rampant pollution, and exploitation of natural resources have left our position in this world endangered. Theatre is an artform in which the cultural and the natural meet and interact. The problems of the world are dramatised on stage, and ecopoetics give us the tools to understand how theatrical performance engages with the issues of the world. Through ecopoetic analysis, I have shown how productions engage with their natural environment, engage their audience, dramatised the issues of their time, and encourage a re-examination of the relationship between human culture and the natural environment. I believe that we are at a critical point in human history, that the dynamics of the world are shifting, and the relationship between culture and nature hangs in the balance. We cannot realise the dream of deep ecology on this planet: there is no return to the "state of nature" for culture, if such a state ever existed. However, we can express, through our cultural artefacts, an active and participatory engagement with the natural world. We can construct our fictional, theatrical worlds in ways that are ecologically responsible, as Mark Fisher argued in the article with which I began this chapter. These worlds can also be constructed to reveal the underlying necessity of an engagement with nature that is just as important to the resolution of our critical planetary situation as conservation in the production process. My outline and use of ecopoetic analysis suggests more than just criticism, it suggests action, engagement, and response to the problems of our world.

Appendix:

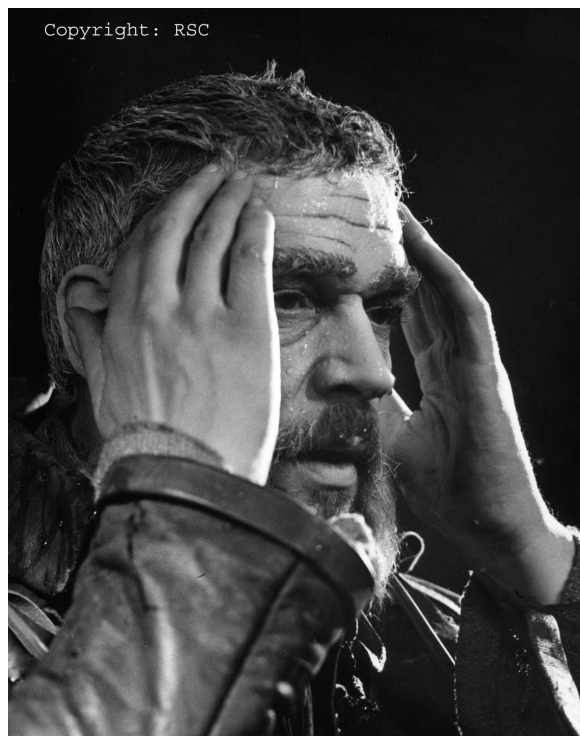
Production Photographs



Figure 1 – Lear (Paul Scofield) abdicating his throne.  
Peter Brook's *King Lear*, 1962, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust



**Figure 2 – Goneril (Irene Worth) observing the aftermath of Lear’s riot in her home. Peter Brook’s *King Lear*, 1962, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 3 – Lear (Paul Scofield) in the throes of insanity. Peter Brook’s *King Lear*, 1962, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**





**Figure 4 – Kent riding into exile.**

**Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways**



**Figure 5 – Lear's knights ride across the landscape.**  
**Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways**



**Figure 6 – Lear (Paul Scofield) treks up the hill with his injured horse behind.**  
Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways



**Figure 7 – Gloucester wanders blind through a field of dead horses.**  
Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways



**Figure 8 – Edgar as Poor Tom.**  
Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways



**Figure 9 – The sun breaks through during Lear's trip to Dover.**  
Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways

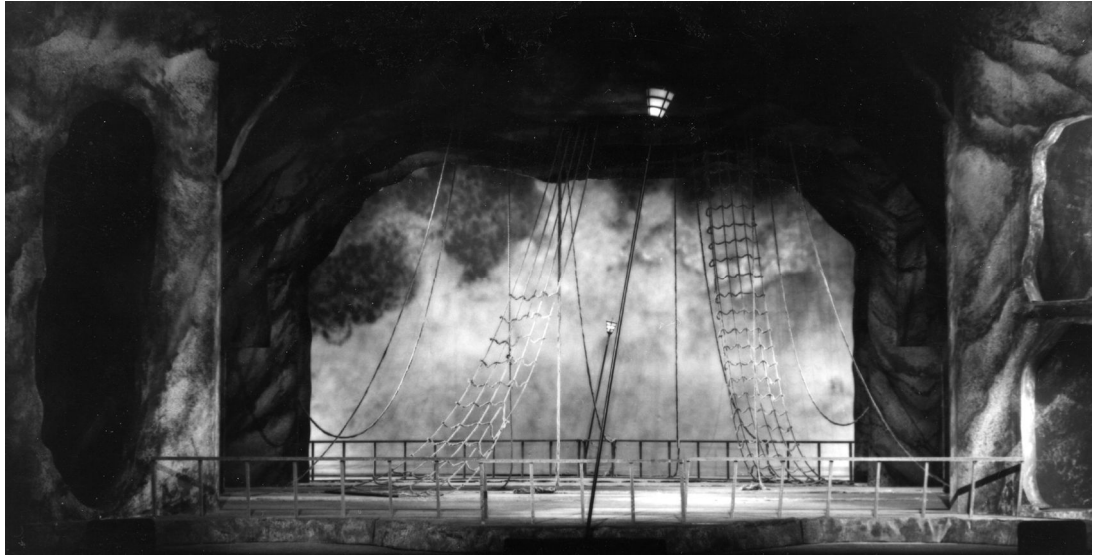




**Figure 10 – Landscape of the beach at Dover.**  
**Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways**



**Figure 11 – Lear madly scrambles into the surf.**  
**Peter Brook, *King Lear*, 1971, copyright Filmways**



**Figure 12 – The setting for the opening storm.**  
**Peter Brook, *The Tempest*, 1957, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 13 – Ariel (Brian Bedford).**  
**Peter Brook, *The Tempest*, 1957, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 14 – Caliban (Alec Clunes).**  
**Peter Brook, *The Tempest*, 1957, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**

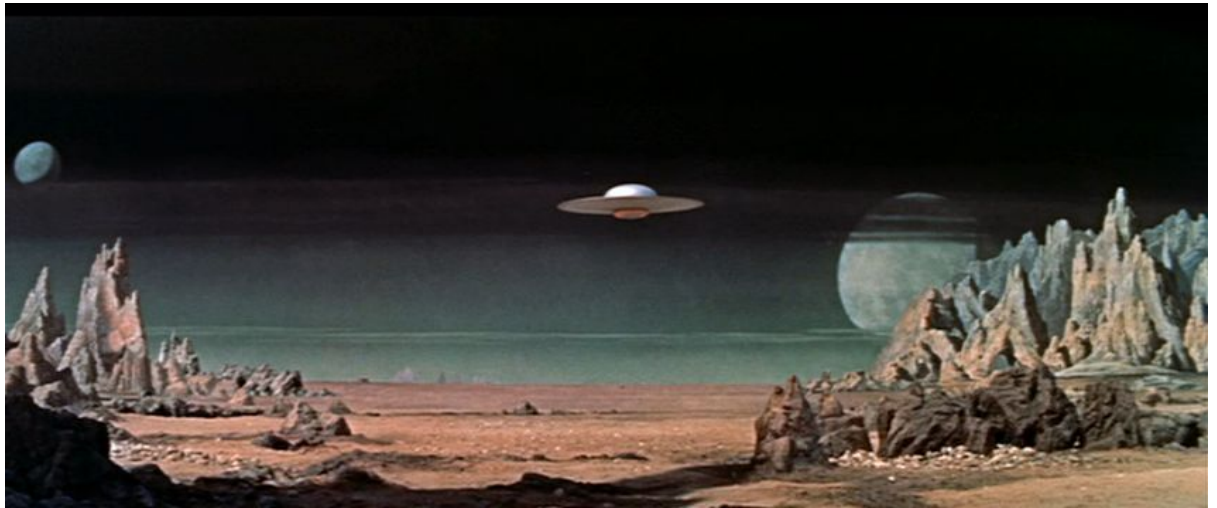


**Figure 15 – Earth rise as it was photographed from the moon's orbit.  
Copyright NASA.**



**Figure 16 – Altair IV viewed on approaching the planet.  
Fred Wilcox McLeod, *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, copyright MGM Pictures**





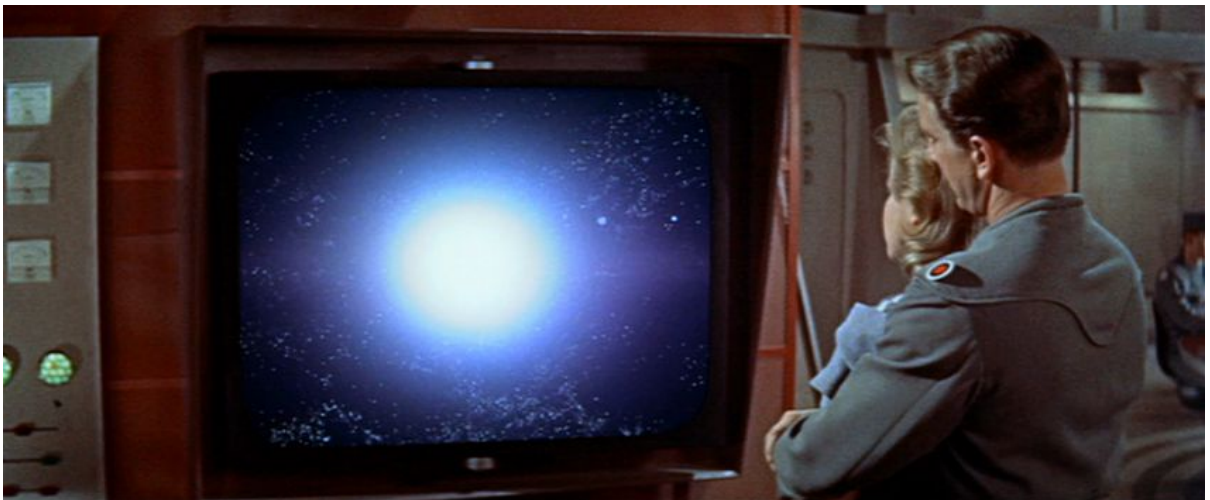
**Figure 17 – The landscape of Altair IV.**  
**Fred Wilcox McLeod, *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, copyright MGM Pictures**



**Figure 18 – Dr. Morbius' home on Altair IV.**  
**Fred Wilcox McLeod, *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, copyright MGM Pictures**



**Figure 19 – Capt. Adams (Leslie Nielsen) disintegrates the attacking tiger.**  
Fred Wilcox McLeod, *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, copyright MGM Pictures



**Figure 20 – Altair IV explodes.**  
Fred Wilcox McLeod, *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, copyright MGM Pictures



**Figure 21 – Caliban (John Light) takes shelter from the storm.  
Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, 2006, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**





**Figure 22 – Caliban (John Light) begs Prospero (Patrick Stewart) to acknowledge him. Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, 2006, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 23 – Ariel (Julian Bleach) as the harpy. Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, 2006, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 24 – Prospero (Patrick Stewart) and Ariel (Julian Bleach) meet outside Prospero’s cell, which is beginning to sink into the ice.**

**Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, 2006, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**



**Figure 25 – Prospero (Patrick Stewart) abjures his “rough magic” while his home burns after Ariel is set free.**

**Rupert Goold, *The Tempest*, 2006, Royal Shakespeare Company, copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**

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